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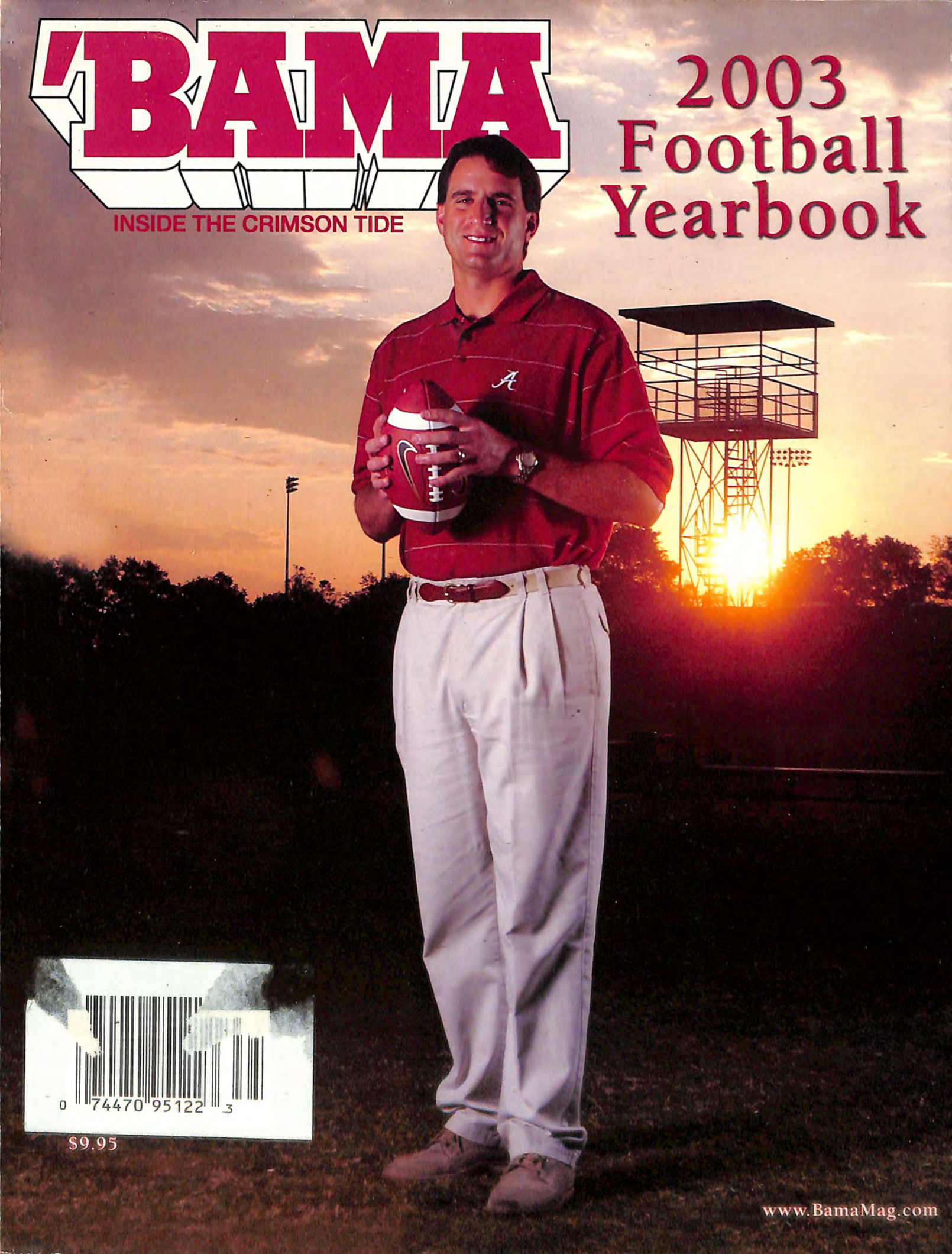
INSIDE THE CRIMSON TIDE

2003 Football Yearbook



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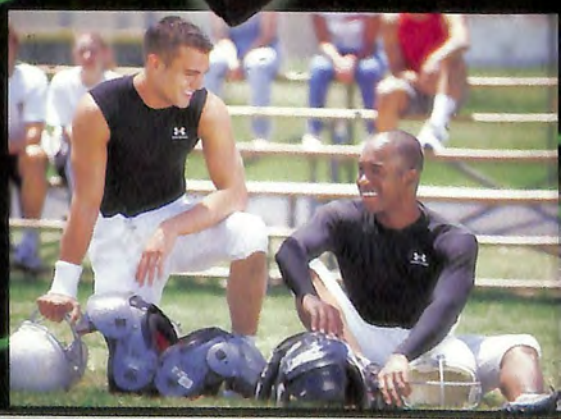

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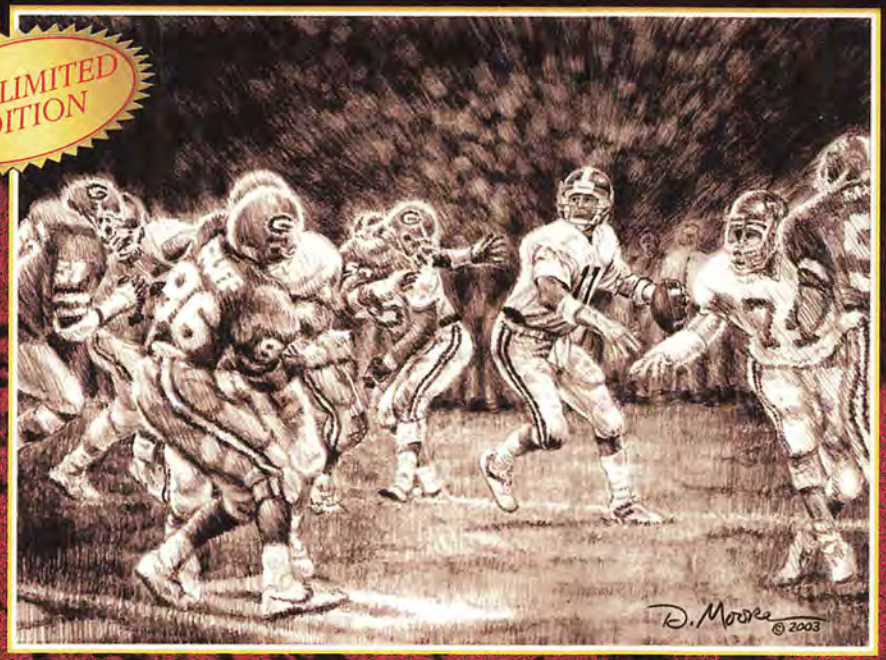

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Nonetheless, Quarterback Mike Shula was not the least bit rattled—as he was no novice when it came to mounting comebacks. In fact, it was in Bama's final game of the 1984 season that Shula had led his team in a dramatic comeback to beat Auburn 17-15. In another few months, he would repeat the last-minute feat against Auburn to set up Van Tiffin's famous 52-yard field goal. With only 50 ticks remaining on the game clock, Shula mounted a 71-yard drive, hitting four out of five passes—his last toss being an 18-yard touchdown strike over the middle to Albert Bell. With Tiffin's extra point, the Tide triumphed in a 20-16 victory over the Bulldogs.

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2003 'Bama Football Yearbook

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INSIDE THE CRIMSON TIDE

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Cover Photo by Barry Fikes

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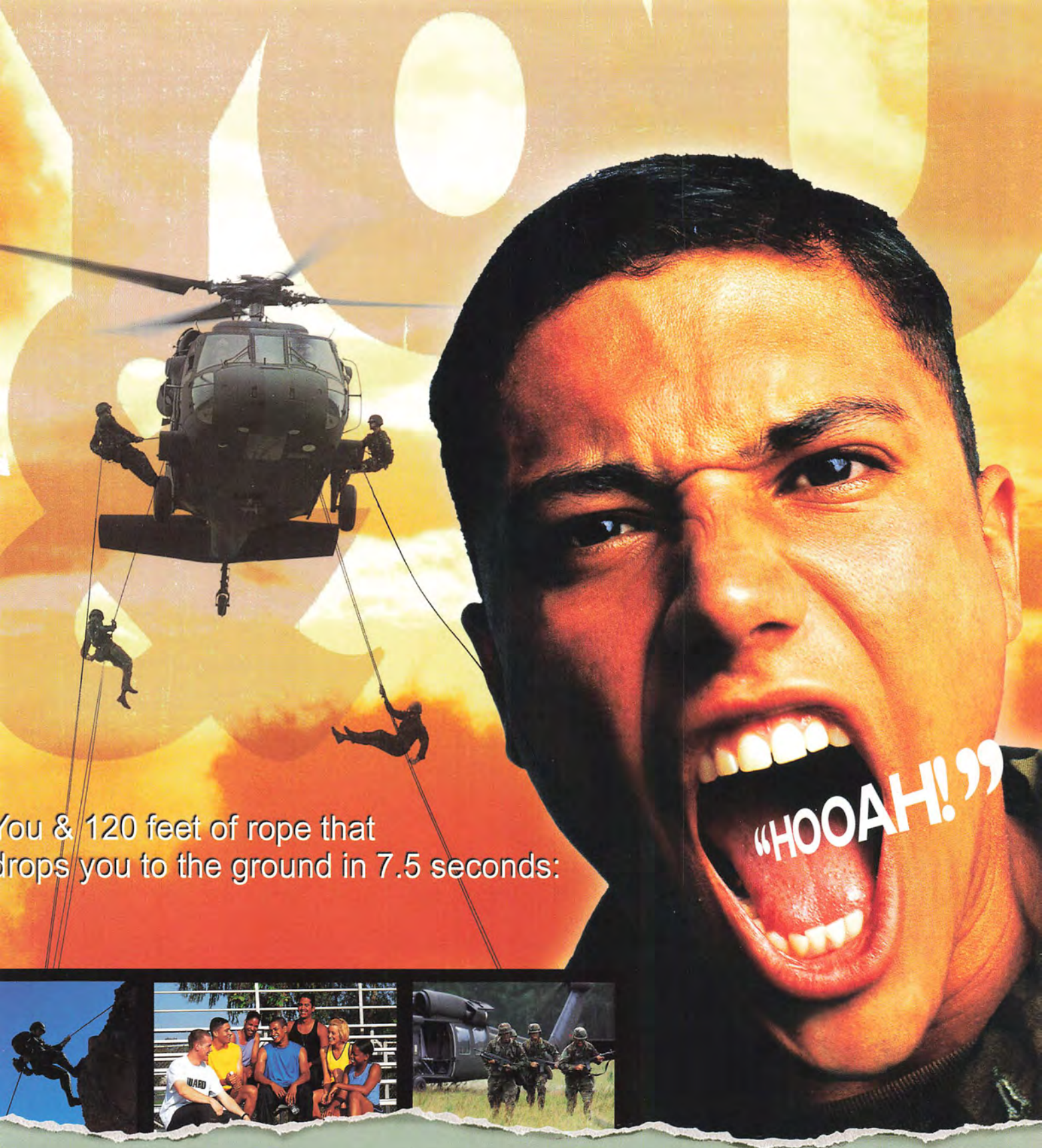

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Frequently, things are neither as good nor as bad as they seem

AN OVERVIEW

by Kirk McNair

An examination of Alabama's football situation going into the 2003 season would not likely lead to the conclusion that Bama have expectations for success. Quite the opposite. Consider the obstacles:

- A team on probation, restricted by severe scholarship cuts.
- No opportunity to play for a championship or a bowl game.
- A schedule that has been ranked as the most difficult in the nation.
- A first-year head coach...
- who wasn't on campus until after the conclusion of spring football practice.

When Mike Shula was named Alabama football coach on May 8, the former Crimson Tide quarterback stepped into a situation unlike any in the history of college football. It seems that Bama football has been in a downward spiral almost since the conclusion of Alabama's last national championship in 1992. The ensuing decade-plus has spawned the occasional decent year, including last season's 10-3 mark. But on-the-field results have been overshadowed by off-the-field turmoil.

And just when it seemed nothing could be more bizarre than that which had gone before, Alabama's head football coaching position became a hot potato. No one could handle it.

A year ago Dennis Franchione was preparing for his second season as Alabama's head football coach and preparing to sign a new 10-year, $15-million contract. Franchione did well enough last fall, forging a 10-3 record and having the best record among Southeastern Conference Western Division teams. But just as in his first year as Bama's coach, the Crimson Tide continued to underachieve, notably in losing games late to Oklahoma and Georgia and failing to compete against Auburn. Alabama was not consistent under Franchione. The Tide was capable of blistering Auburn in Auburn and Tennessee in Knoxville and LSU in Baton Rouge, and yet failing miserably against the likes of Mississippi and South Carolina.

In the end, Franchione proved to have less an opinion of himself than most in the Bama camp had of Franchione. Franchione was hired by Mal Moore from TCU and by virtue of being the Crimson Tide head coach immediately became a nationally-known coach. And Franchione didn't come to Alabama hired under false pretenses. He knew tough NCAA sanctions were likely to come, and he was well compensated to face that adversity.

And he had convinced Alabama fans he could do the job. But reminiscent of Bill Curry in 1990, Franchione showed he didn't have confidence he could succeed. He elected to run. Not only did he fail to sign the contract he had agreed to, he reneged on the five years he had remaining on his original contract.

And he earned national derision because he failed to return the loyalty his Alabama team had given him. Franchione fled to Texas A&M to look things over and jumped at the Aggies' offer, failing to first inform the players who had stood by him.

It was back to the drawing board for Mal Moore. And just as had been the case two years earlier, Moore was twice spurned by potential head coaches before finding what seemed to be the right man. Virginia Tech's Frank Beamer probably could have had the job either in 2001 (when Miami's Butch Davis was the number one choice, but turned it down and headed for the NFL) or last December. And Moore had come to terms with former Tide player Mike Riley, who was an assistant coach with the New Orleans Saints, before Riley made an 11th-hour withdrawal.

Enter Mike Price. Moore had known him casually since Price was an assistant at Washington State and Moore was an assistant at Alabama. But before making the offer, Moore made the most thorough background search imaginable. College administrators and coaches, NCAA officials, and NFL sources all gave Mike Price five-star ratings. Not only was he a first-class football coach who had twice taken Washington State to the Rose Bowl (including last season), he was unblemished as a person, happily married to his childhood sweetheart, father of three, and doting grandfather.

Then came the unthinkable. A night of drinking, terrible decisions involving women, and Price was headed for the unemployment line. Alabama President Robert Witt fired Price just as Bama players were preparing for summer break.

2003 Alabama Football Schedule

Date	Opponent	Site
August 30	South Florida	Birmingham
September 6	Oklahoma	Tuscaloosa
September 13	Kentucky	Tuscaloosa
September 20	Northern Illinois	Tuscaloosa
September 27	Arkansas	Tuscaloosa
October 4	Georgia	Athens
October 11	Southern Miss (Homecoming)	Tuscaloosa
October 18	Mississippi	Oxford
October 25	Tennessee	Tuscaloosa
November 8	Mississippi State	Starkville
November 15	LSU	Tuscaloosa
November 22	Auburn	Auburn
November 29	Hawaii	Honolulu

Moore didn't take much time in finding the Crimson Tide's seventh head coach since Paul Bryant retired following the 1982 season. Moore interviewed three National Football League assistant coaches who are former Bama players–Richard Williamson of Carolina, Sylvester Croom of Detroit, and Mike Shula of Miami. He selected Shula.

But not all is negative in the Crimson Tide football camp. Although Shula had never been a head coach, he has been around one of the greatest his entire life. While most Bama followers think of Mike Shula as being the quarterback who engineered some of Alabama's most exciting victories in Shula's playing days at The Capstone, around the nation Mike Shula is best known for his royal coaching blood, being the son of the NFL's all-time most successful coach, Don Shula.

That alone won't determine Mike Shula's head coaching fortune, but early indications are that son was paying attention to father. Although somewhat shy in public, Mike Shula demonstrates in the offices of Alabama's football building that he has the right stuff.

As a longtime assistant coach in the NFL, Shula was making suggestions. As a head coach at Alabama, he will be making decisions. Not all of them will be correct, and he will have to forge ahead with new plans.

Shula had to make some decisions quickly. He elected to keep a highly-regarded defensive staff intact. The staff, headed by veteran Joe Kines, was assembled by Mike Price and Kines. That assures continuity from spring practice on that side. Moreover, a new head coach with a zillion new things to worry about won't have to worry about finding and hiring any defensive coach; at least no earlier than next winter.

Shula also kept a couple of key assistants on offense from the Price staff, offensive line coach Bobby Connelly and highly-regarded offensive mind Sparky Woods. Connelly had come with Price from Washington State, while Woods has been both a head coach and an assistant coach in the Southeastern Conference. But Shula's key decision on offense was to bring David Rader out of retirement. Rader had been receivers coach at Bama when Shula was a player. The former NFL quarterback had gone on to head coach at his alma mater at Tulsa and was just the man Shula needed to install an offense at breakneck pace.

It is the nature of the game that a football team goes with its coach. And so the schemes and terminology installed in the brief Mike Price term will be adjusted to suit Mike Shula. Shula and the offensive staff went into overdrive in examining videotapes of last season and last spring to determine what might be part of the 2003 Crimson Tide offense. It is heartening that Shula said he has seen things he likes and has even attempted to keep some of the Price terminology.

Although Franchione and Price will never be held in high regard by the Bama football faithful, Alabama under Shula will benefit from things done by both his immediate predecessors.

His miserable departure notwithstanding, Franchione made critical improvements in Alabama's football situation. Franchione inherited a team bankrupt from a morale standpoint following the debacle under Mike DuBose. He gave those players new confidence. He also instituted a program of discipline, particularly regarding academics and conditioning. And his staff recruited well.

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And while the Price staff never coached a Bama game, they demonstrated they are very good coaches. Alabama made obvious progress at almost every position in the spring practice conducted by Mike Price.

What Alabama must do offensively between now and August 30 when Bama opens the 2003 season against South Florida at Birmingham's Legion Field is to have an offense installed. While difficult, it is not impossible.

Shula needs only to go down the hall and speak to Mal Moore about the opportunity for startling achievement when installing a new offense in a short period of time. Moore was Alabama's quarterbacks coach in 1971. Bama had a long period of offensive success with such passing quarterbacks as Joe Namath, Steve Sloan, Kenny Stabler, and Scott Hunter. But all of a sudden Alabama wasn't winning at a level acceptable to Head Coach Paul Bryant.

Bryant called his offensive staff together just days before the return of players for fall practice and announced that Bama was dropping the dropback passing game for the new option running game being used with success at Texas and Oklahoma. Alabama would become a wishbone team.

And that 1971 team wasn't opening the season at home against South Florida. It was opening in the Los Angeles Coliseum against Southern Cal, picked to win the national championship. Alabama upset Southern Cal to start the season and romped 31-7 over an undefeated Auburn team with Heisman Trophy winner Pat Sullivan at quarterback to conclude an 11-0 regular season. Although Alabama lost the national championship game to Nebraska in the Orange Bowl, the Tide quick switch was one of the all-time great stories in college football history.

College football isn't brain surgery. While complicated, the new offense can be taught by Alabama's coaches and learned by Alabama's players. It will be far less change from the Mike Price offense to the Mike Shula offense than was that 1971 move to the wishbone.

One disadvantage in having Alabama's extraordinary football tradition is that almost every opponent considers the Alabama game to be the biggest on its schedule. NationalChampions.net, a college football internet site, recently judged Bama's schedule to be difficult even without that incentive. In fact, the news service rated Alabama's 2003 schedule to be the nation's most difficult.

South Florida, Alabama's opening opponent, is not considered a pushover. The USF head coach, Jim Leavitt, was one of many who was considered a possibility to be Alabama's head football coach over the past few months, and people looked into what the Bulls have done under Leavitt. It has been impressive.

But the real meat of the schedule is three legitimate top ten teams in Oklahoma, Georgia and Auburn. Additionally, Tennessee and LSU are considered top 25 teams. And non-conference games in addition to South Florida include three teams expected to challenge for their conference championships: Northern Illinois (MAC), Southern Miss (Conference USA), and Hawaii (WAC).

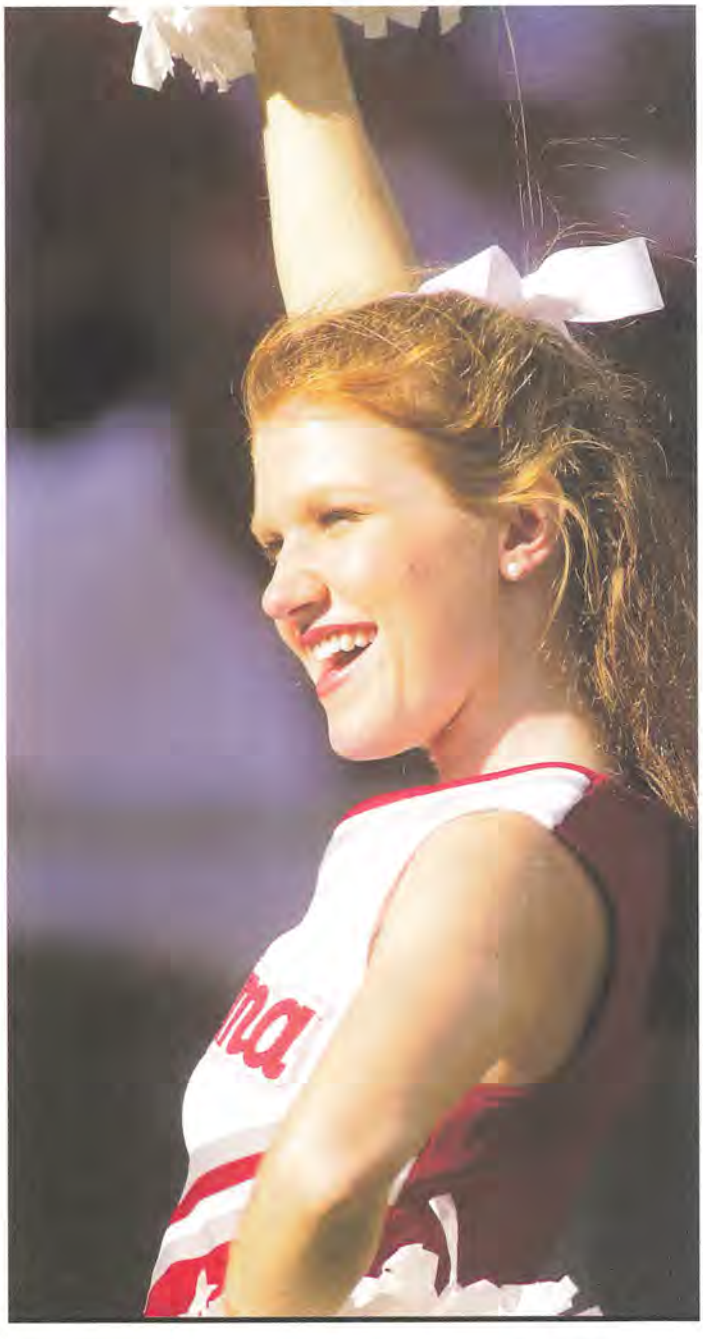
However, there is also good news. The most important ingredient in football success is having good football players, and Alabama's cupboard is not as bare as many would believe.

It still starts with quarterback, and Shula is bound to delight in Alabama's stable, headed by Brodie Croyle. The difference between good teams and great teams is often the offensive line, and Bama's could be very good since it includes two All-America types in Wes Britt and Justin Smiley. Bama has more defensive linemen than almost every team in the Southeastern Conference, and outstanding linebackers. And it's almost impossible that the play of special teams–horrendous under Franchione–won't be improved.

In upcoming pages we will examine each position in detail.

A word of warning: It may be difficult to report on practice progress this fall, at least for a few games. While Shula is philosophically a proponent of open practices, there are reports that he is considering keeping his cards close to his chest, closing practices to the media for at least the first few games.

But lack of day-to-day practice reports will be acceptable if Saturday game results are pleasing.



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THE OFFENSE

Flexibility will be key to helping players have a chance to succeed

by J.E. Lisby

For Alabama offensive football players, it was a long winter. Through no fault of their own these beleaguered young men will have toiled for three different offensive coordinators and 13 different position coaches in the space of less than nine months. Even worse, the shift in philosophy from 2002's run-oriented, option offense to the pass-happy schemes of spring was head-swimming stuff. Mike Shula's arrival promises much-needed stability to Alabama football, but he also brings with him yet another playbook to be absorbed.

The good news is that Shula isn't wedded to a predetermined offensive game plan. He and Offensive Coordinator Dave Rader worked dawn to dusk their first two months in Tuscaloosa, assessing their players' strengths and designing an appropriate offense. "We're going to be flexible enough to tweak things offensively to cater to their talents," Shula said. "We want to put our players in positions to do what they're good at doing. Our job is to see what the players do best and then give them a way to do that."

Because of Alabama's recent coaching carousel, the Tide's offensive brain trust had to rely on film study and advice from current assistants who had worked with the players during spring practice. "We've had to assess our talent quickly," Rader said. "Not only did Coach Shula and I spend the first few weeks talking about what we'd like to do as an offense, but also asking 'Who are we going to do it with?' What we want to accomplish on offense is pretty basic. We want to win our opening game. And then win the next game and the next game."

Unlike some head coaches, Shula's offensive schemes aren't written in stone. But having spent his entire coaching career in the National Football League, Shula learned long ago that a successful offense must be able to both run and pass. "Balance is a key goal," Rader said. "And from watching tape of last year, it appears that we have the football talent and athletic ability available to us to accomplish that goal."

Rader spent the better part of 12 seasons as head coach at Tulsa. Overmatched in personnel in most games, Rader developed a reputation for offensive innovation to move the football. Very often that translated to throwing all over the park. And of course during his playing career at Alabama Shula was known as a passing quarterback. But at Alabama talented running backs abound, and the two definitely plan to take advantage of those runners. "Being balanced–being able to run and pass the football–gives you a chance in every game," Rader said. "If one aspect of your offense isn't working very well, then you have something else ready to roll."

One thing the Bama coaches won't have to worry about this fall is finding talent. Only three starters were lost from a squad that finished second in the SEC and 18th nationally in rushing offense. Though the Tide did rely heavily on an effective option attack, Alabama passed the ball well enough last season to finish second in the SEC in total offense. The Tide was particularly effective protecting the football, yielding only nine fumbles and nine interceptions to finish 14th in the nation and second in the conference in turnovers lost.

After assessing the talent on hand, Rader has even higher long-term goals for the offense. "If we had a vision to describe our offense, three words would describe what we want to achieve: balanced, aggressive, and efficient," he said. "Besides what I've already said, balanced also means that during the game we're always in a position to either run or pass. We're enough in control of the game that we're not forced to throw to get ourselves back into the game.

"We want to be aggressive in our play calling, but not to the point where we don't use the talent that we have on the team.

"Efficient shouldn't be misunderstood to mean either average or compromising. By efficient we mean maximizing the talent and energy that's available."

Shula and Rader share strong backgrounds in offensive football, but good coaches understand the importance of defensive manpower. Offensive fireworks are fun to watch, but a wise head coach is careful not to hang his defensive coordinator out to dry. Rader said, "Balance also involves working well with your special teams and defense. We don't want to be so aggressive that we compromise the position we put our special teams in or compromise our defense. We don't want to be aggressive to the low percentage side."

2003 Offensive Depth Chart

Left Tackle (Britt is a pre-season All American)
Wesley Britt, Atlas Herrion, Chris Capps
Left Guard (an All American also, Smiley is a ferocious player)
Justin Smiley, Danny Martz, Andy Harrison
Center (Closner is young, but he plays with a mean streak)
J.B. Closner, Matt Lomax, Cody Grammer
Right Guard ("Big D" worked during the summer to lose weight)
Dennis Alexander, Mark Sanders, Von Ewing
Right Tackle (Mathis is probably Bama's most underrated player on offense)
Evan Mathis, Justin Moon, Travis West
Tight End (any of these three could end up starting)
David Cavan, Clint Johnston, Donald Clarke
Quarterback (Bama's offense is now in Croyle's hands)
Brodie Croyle, Spencer Pennington, Brandon Avalos, Mike Machen
Tailback (though a tad small, Bama's tailbacks are explosive)
Shaud Williams, Ray Hudson, Kenneth Darby, Tim Castille
Fullback (McLain was easily the "find" of last year's signing class)
Greg McLain, LeRon McClain, Josh Smith
Split End (Luke and Fletcher can both go deep)
Triandos Luke, Zach Fletcher, Marcus McKnight, William Roach, Matt Miller, Matt Ragland
Flanker (Fulgham is one of the strongest receivers in the country)
Dre Fulgham, Brandon Greer, Scoop McDowell, Tarry Givens, D.J. Chambers, Dennis DuBois
Slotback (Carter returns from injury)
Antonio Carter, Lance Taylor, Brandon Brooks, Matt Caddell, Tyrone Prothro, Derek DuBois

Time of possession is far from the only important statistic in football, but when it comes to keeping a defense fresh for the fourth quarter it can be vital. "We'd like to have our offense stay on the field a long time," Rader said. "Keep our defense on the bench; and score touchdowns. That's the goal."

That idea represents a change from the previous offensive staff. In the spring Alabama practiced with one running back and multiple receivers. In Bama's short-lived one-back attack, the fullback position disappeared from the depth chart. But Rader says a power-running game is back in the gameplan. "That's the preference for almost everyone," he said. "You want to have the talent to develop a two-back offense with a true fullback. To me that's part of being aggressive and still being efficient. On any given down we would like to trot out onto the field with one receiver, two receivers, three receivers, four receivers and even five receivers. We would like to have the ability to use all those formations. But if we trot out with two receivers or one receiver, then your fullback has to be a player."

Bama's 2003 offense will be a blend of old and new, incorporating ideas from several systems. In Shula and Rader, the Tide squad will benefit from a double-dose of quarterbacks coaching, so expect Bama quarterbacks to make good use of the four senior wide receivers.

But with a new starting quarterback calling a new set of offensive plays, there could be growing pains early in the season. Rader has identified a team strength. He said, "You have to do what your personnel allows, and the strength of our personnel starts up front. We've got an excellent offensive front. It's great to have those guys in front of us. It's apparent that they were well coached this spring. We can really build around that strength."

Working behind that stalwart line, the Tide's stable of running backs should pick up where they left off last season. "It certainly appears that we have tailbacks who understand football," Rader said. "They know how to go North and South. They know how to make people miss. That's a real positive. A lot of that was because there was some excellent blocking going on in front of them. That's where it starts, up front. I really do think there is the makings of a strong running game."

Oh To Have 11 Like Shaud Williams

by Steve Wilson

Andrews, Texas is a town of around 10,000 residents in arid west Texas, once the territory of the mighty Comanche Indians before the discovery of oil in 1929 brought the new Americans.

In this small town Tide tailback Shaud Williams began his rise to prominence, an escalation threatened by change, but preserved and nurtured by Shaud's intense desire for success.

Kasey Dunn wasn't Alabama's running backs coach for long. Dunn was brought to Bama by Mike Price, but wasn't retained by Mike Shula. But while Dunn's time with Williams was brief, Shaud made an impression. Dunn said, "If Alabama had 11 guys like him, they win 13 straight games next year for sure."

Shaud has been described as a smaller version of former Tide great and all-time leading rusher Shaun Alexander, one of those exceptional breed of running backs who can go outside, mix it up between the tackles, and also catch passes.

Williams stands at a well-cut 5-8, 190 pounds. Despite his height, he's more than strong enough to take the pounding in the ultra-physical trenches of the SEC. His vision and cutback ability and his quick start are qualities in star runners. And despite his size, he is an able and willing and effective blocker.

Shaud joins a list of smaller running backs who have successfully proven that size is not necessarily critical to playing ability. Emmit Smith, the NFL's all-time rushing leader; Priest Holmes, last year's pro leader in all-purpose yards; and Warrick Dunn all stand only 5-9, yet all have enjoyed success in the size-conscious NFL.

His story began on the dry fields and Friday nights at Andrews High School. Through a tortured journey via Texas Tech in Lubbock, Williams has evolved as the Tide's feature back and senior leader.

In Texas prep football, Williams was a multi-sport running sensation. He made the varsity team as a freshman, a rare feat in 4A football in Texas. In his sophomore campaign he gained 1,867 yards on the ground against some the toughest competition in the Lonestar State. As a senior, Williams rushed for 2,121 yards. For four straight years Williams was named to the all-region team, and in his final two years was an all-state selection.

(He also placed second in the state track meet in the 110-meter hurdles and led his high school baseball team to the state semifinals playing shortstop. He was drafted in 1999 by the Atlanta Braves in the 13th round with the 414th pick and gave Bama baseball a short tryout last spring.)

After high school, Williams did not venture far from home, signing with Texas Tech, only an hour's drive from Andrews. The diminutive tailback's career began on the upswing in his first campaign. Williams set the Red Raiders' freshman single-game rushing record with 230 yards on only 21 carries against Colorado and went on to lead Tech in rushing with 658 yards on 112 carries and seven touchdowns. But in Williams' sophomore campaign, the Red Raiders had a coaching change, and Texas Tech began the transition from a rushing-oriented offense to a single-back scheme featuring a wide-open, all-over-the-field passing game. Williams injured his hamstring that spring and was replaced at tailback by Ricky Williams, who had just returned from his redshirt year after a knee injury. That season Williams saw time at wideout, but his career in Lubbock was done.

"I saw the writing on the wall, saw it was time to move on and display my talents somewhere else," Williams said. "I wanted to be a part of a university rich in tradition."

After transferring to Alabama Williams sat out a year to meet NCAA transfer requirements. The tailback emerged in his first season at The Capstone as a playmaker, even though he was playing in a crowded backfield with Ahmaad Galloway, Santonio Beard and Ray Hudson.

The Dennis Franchione coaching staff created the A-Back position in the off-season to take advantage of Williams' talents as a runner and receiver.

Last season, Williams ably filled the gaping hole in the Alabama backfield created when his good friend Ahmaad Galloway went down with a torn ACL. As a tribute to his friend, Williams wore his number 29 on his wrist bands for the remainder of the season.

"It was tough," Williams said. "I really had a hard time talking to him. I can't really explain it, but it was hard talking to him with his knee in the brace."

This year Williams enters the season on center stage. "It's kind of ironic, but I like this offense a lot better," Williams said. "I know I'm going to get a chance to get my hands on the ball and make something happen."

NOTE: Since he previously worked with two different head coaches at Texas Tech, add in Dennis Franchione, Mike Price and Mike Shula and Williams will end his college career with the dubious distinction of having played for five different head coaches–an "honor" he'd just as soon have done without.

Countless details have yet to be worked out, but Rader does expect to spend game day in the press box with Shula on the sidelines with the team. But which one will call the plays is still up in the air. "That hasn't been decided yet," Rader said. "But including me, there are at least three guys on offense who have called plays before. And one of them is the head coach."

Shula and Rader worked long hours on both schemes and terminology, seeking to minimize the re-learning process while also making sure the plan was sound. Additionally, the players spent some summer time in the film room watching videotapes produced by the Tide staff to explain the new offense. The skill position players also are working together in off-season, voluntary sessions that simulate the passing game, but Shula knows the players can do only so much on their own. He said, "When we get to the fall, the commitment of the players will be crucial. They'll have to spend more time on their own and give more effort to the learning process."

Here's a look at the Alabama offense by position:

QUARTERBACK

Spring practice confirmed what virtually every Alabama fan expected: Brodie Croyle is now "the man." As the backup to Tyler Watts last year, Croyle showed flashes of his expansive potential. Watts is now graduated, and Croyle has taken up the reins of the Crimson Tide attack. Rated the nation's top passing prospect coming out of high school, Croyle knows something about outsized expectations. Brodie is the son of John Croyle, an all-star lineman for Paul Bryant in the 1970s. So the young man grew up immersed in Crimson Tide lore. Despite missing almost his entire senior season with a knee injury, Croyle still passed for 9,323 yards and 105 touchdowns, both Alabama state records during his prep career. He also holds the state record for passing yards in a single game (528), passing yards in a season (3,787), touchdown passes in a season (44) and touchdown passes in a game (7). During his high school career he completed a whopping 524 passes against only 37 interceptions.

Sporting jersey number 12, it's understandable that Croyle has been compared to the likes of former Tide greats Joe Namath and Kenny Stabler. And Croyle just may have the talent to back it up.

From the moment he stepped on campus as an early-entry freshman, Croyle impressed. Veteran Tide receivers talked about the zip on his passes, sometimes complaining he threw too hard. He redshirted that first season, gaining strength and learning the college game. Then last year he saw extensive playing time as a redshirt freshman. Croyle played in 12 of the Tide's 13 games, starting against Arkansas and Georgia. On the road in front of a hostile Razorbacks crowd, Croyle muted the pigs with 12-of-24 passing for 285 yards and a pair of touchdowns in a 30-12 Tide romp. Officially, his late-game touchdown went for 50 yards, but Croyle's perfect spiral actually traveled more than 60 yards in the air to hit a streaking Zach Fletcher in stride.

Like most strong-armed quarterbacks, Croyle is working to improve his touch passes, but he has all the throws in his arsenal. Working for most of the season in a backup role, Croyle threw for 100 yards or more in consecutive games against Arkansas, Georgia, Ole Miss and Tennessee. He averaged 17.4 yards per completion and had 14 plays of 25 yards or more; four that went for more than 50 yards.

At 6-2, 199 pounds, Croyle could stand to add 15 or so pounds to his relatively lithe frame. That's especially important, given the rigors of the long SEC schedule. But no one questions his talented right arm. So long as he stays healthy, he has a very real chance to live up to every bit of the hype.

Rader will have primary responsibility for developing Croyle and the other Tide quarterbacks. "I'm very impressed with Brodie," Rader said. "Of course, of all our quarterbacks, he's the one we had the most videotape of. I think we can build around Brodie."

Given the rigors of SEC play, Spencer Pennington and Brandon Avalos could be critical to Bama's success. It's a rare conference team whose starting quarterback lasts an entire season, and Croyle does have a history of injury. Rader noted the importance of an effective second-string quarterback. "Spencer did some nice things in the spring," Rader said. "In fact, from what I've seen so far, all of our quarterbacks are bright, intelligent men. I think they'll catch onto the new offense quickly."

Sophomore quarterback Brodie Croyle is expected to lead Bama's offense.

Pennington is a big (6-4, 223), versatile athlete with a good arm. A good enough third baseman to be drafted by Major League Baseball, he played baseball for the Tide as a true freshman but gave up the game midway through the 2003 season to concentrate on football. "I knew when I signed here that there was going to come a time when I had to pick one sport," Pennington said. "I've got a real good chance to play this year. It's right there within my grasp."

As evidence of that assessment, Pennington enjoyed a very good spring practice, solidifying himself as the Tide's number two quarterback. Pennington consistently showed poise and a grasp of the offense, looking the part of a field general. Despite a forgettable A-Day game in which he took the second offense against Bama's first defense with little success, the sophomore enters this season ready for playing time.

Another baseball/football combo player, Brandon Avalos can hurt a defense with his arm or legs. At 6-0, 175 pounds, he still needs to add layers of muscle. But his combination of speed, elusiveness and a solid arm present real problems for a defense. Lay back and he'll run for a first down; crowd the line of scrimmage and Avalos will beat you with the pass. Baseball during the spring put him behind Bama's other two scholarshipped quarterbacks, but Avalos is very intelligent and a hard worker and will catch up.

A former minor league pitcher for the Atlanta Braves and Baltimore Orioles, Mike Machen's arrival on campus last winter was good news for a scholarship-strapped program. His baseball contract pays for his tuition, meaning the Tide gained a quality athlete not subject to the scholarship restrictions. At 6-6, 230 pounds, Machen is plenty big for quarterback, and the ex-pitcher demonstrated a very strong arm. However the spring A-Day game was Machen's first taste of football in more than three years, so he'll need time to adjust. A redshirt year is probable.

Cliff Davis (6-5, 210) of Eupora, Mississippi signed with the Tide last winter. However, Davis was a high-round draft choice by Major League Baseball and elected to pass up college football for pro baseball. That is more a future loss than current loss since he was surely ticketed for a redshirt season this fall.

RUNNING BACK

Alabama has a long and glorious history as a powerful running football team, but spring plans seemed to signal the end of that persona. The new era would be one-back offense and multiple wide receiver sets. Promises to open up the passing game were well received, but did that have to come at the expense of running the football?

Sparky Woods, who will coach Bama's running backs, has seen just about every offensive scheme there is in his more than 25 years of coaching, and he

says Bama will continue infantry tactics. "Coach Shula wants to be able to be a physical team and run the football while being able to throw the ball," Woods said. "The National Football League has the most money, the most time, and the most skilled athletes. Coach Shula has had a ton of experience there. He knows what it takes to win. Whether you run it one more time or throw it one more time, Coach Shula knows we'd better be able to do both."

Last season the Tide running game was very good. Averaging slightly more than 213 yards per game, Bama's running backs ran around and over the opposition, finishing as the 18th-best running team in the nation, second in the SEC. "I think we've got talent," Woods said. "We've got guys who can run. We've got reckless guys who are also unselfish players willing to block. They can catch the football. These same guys won 10 games a year ago."

Well, not exactly the same guys. Ahmaad Galloway has departed for the NFL, and the mercurial Santonio Beard made what is in retrospect a very poor decision to leave college early. But Shaud Williams, Greg McLain and Ray Hudson return to lead the unit. Woods said, "I'm not complaining about the talent. We don't have a returning all-conference player, but we've got guys who have been in big games and have a chance to be all-conference."

TAILBACK

At 5-8, 5-10 and 5-11 respectively, Bama's top three tailbacks won't intimidate anyone with their size. But in Shaud Williams, Ray Hudson and Kenneth Darby, Woods expects the Tide to attack opponents in waves. "We'll play tailback by committee," Woods said. "We'll utilize all of them rather than just one guy. That will help us stay healthy. They're all put together pretty good, but they're not huge. So instead of one guy playing 50 snaps maybe we'll have one play 35 and another play 15."

Led by senior Shaud Williams, the Tide tailbacks may be a bit on the small side, but they will sport plenty of talent. Williams took over as starter last season when Galloway was lost to injury and responded with 921 yards rushing to lead the Tide. He also contributed 228 yards on 21 pass receptions. Williams finished the year ranked 42nd nationally as an all-purpose runner. Acknowledging the senior tailback's talent, Woods pointed out an even more important quality for a coach. "Shaud is a great practice player," Woods said. "He has a great work ethic. He has very good ability, but his work ethic impresses me."

The line between Ray Hudson and Kenneth Darby is razor thin, but Hudson gets the nod for second string based on his experience. Listed at 5-11, 208 pounds, Hudson isn't a lot bigger than Shaud Williams, but the junior is one of the fastest straight-ahead runners on the team. In games during his freshman year he was a bit tentative carrying the football, but last season Hudson ran with more confidence. He finished 2002 with 306 yards rushing and 50 receiving, scoring two offensive touchdowns. Woods described Hudson as "Speed and more speed. And Ray's plenty big. He may not be a 35-times-a-game back, but he's big enough to play. And he's got blazing speed."

Redshirt freshman Kenneth Darby showed excellent ability when he first arrived on campus, and the redshirt freshman has only gotten better. A year's worth of work in the weight room has Darby up to a rock-solid 202 pounds, and in the five yards just behind and ahead of the line of scrimmage he may be the fastest back on the team.

Combining speed and power, Darby can run away from linebackers and make a defensive back pay for attempting the tackle. "Kenneth looks like a mixture of Shaud and Ray," Woods said. "He's quick to the hole, he changes direction. He's got a low center of gravity, and he's got an excellent burst (of speed). He needs experience, but he's learning."

Tim Castille (5-11, 220) was considered the state's top back as a senior and

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signed with the Tide last winter. The son of former Tide great Jeremiah Castille (1979-82), Tim will begin his college career at tailback. If he keeps growing he could end up at fullback or linebacker. Walk-ons Justin Ballard, Ryan Babb, and Kyle Bennett also worked at tailback in the spring.

FULLBACK

Given that Alabama didn't even list the position on its depth chart in the spring, fullback has the most question marks entering fall camp. The previous staff favored a decidedly different one-back approach, preferring to lure defenders away with an extra receiver rather than blocking them straight up. But Shula's ideas on the subject of fullbacks are more mainstream. "We'll be more of a two-back, certainly more than we were in the spring," Woods said. "What changes that will force in personnel we don't know the specific answers yet. Whether Greg McLain or anybody else will definitely move, I can't say now. But I do think that if you are defending us then you'd better be prepared for the two-back set as well as a one back. From watching film of the Miami Dolphins (where Shula coached before taking the Tide job), there is certainly room in their offense to utilize a fullback."

McLain (6-2, 246), who spent spring practice working at tight end, certainly looks the part of a blocking fullback, but he's not the only possibility for a position move. Woods commented, "Having a fullback doesn't always mean that you just go and knock the defender out of the hole. Fullbacks can also be effective pass receivers. I don't think our guys will shy back from hitting their guy in the mouth. Alabama has been physical in the past, and there is no reason to think we won't be physical this year."

One of the most versatile athletes on the squad, McLain is willing to play anywhere he's needed to help the team. Last season that meant fullback, and as one of only two true freshmen to see action McLain ended up starting five of Bama's final eight games. Used mainly as a lead blocker for the Tide tailbacks, McLain had 19 carries for 81 yards. He also caught three passes. "Greg is the first guy you think about when you think about a fullback," Woods said. "He could play tight end or fullback next year, but common sense would tell you he's the most likely guy to move."

A handful of players quit the team before having a day on the practice field with Coach Shula and staff, including Nic Luke. Luke was actually listed as a tailback, but was no better than fourth team and was penciled in to move to fullback.

True freshman LéRon McClain plans to enroll in school this fall. Considered one of the premier fullback prospects in the nation last season, McClain could see immediate playing time at the position. But there are questions about his eligibility.

If depth problems at fullback continue during fall camp, it's possible sophomore Juke King could again move from linebacker to fullback. King, who is coming off knee surgery last spring, worked some at the position in 2002, seeing limited action in two games.

Junior Josh Smith (5-10, 210) and senior Nathan Cox (6-0, 228) would also be prime candidates for a move back to fullback. Both are veteran walk-ons who used to play the position. Smith holds the bench press record for running backs with a lift of 470 pounds. An excellent student, Cox is the son of former Tide player Allen Cox (1972).

TIGHT END

Given Mike Shula's NFL background, it's no surprise that he believes strongly in the value of a good tight end to an offense. As every quarterback will attest, a tight end running open on a drag route across the middle can be a passer's best friend, especially if the opposing defensive coordinator calls for a blitz.

New assistant Dave Ungerer, who will tutor tight ends, said, "We're still working on the offense, but I've talked enough with Coach Shula to know he believes in using the tight end. We'll work them into the pass patterns whenever possible."

Normally two tight ends are used in short-yardage situations only, when an offense needs some extra push to pick up the tough inside yards. But in 2003 Bama might have something different in mind. "We'll use one and two tight ends for blocking in the running game," Ungerer said. "And we'll even use two tight ends in the passing game. I know the tight end will be an important part of the offense."

After spending the past two months scouting his own players, Offensive Coordinator Dave Rader agrees. "From watching tape, I certainly do think that we'll have the talent to use the tight ends in our offense. They're going to have to be able to block and catch, because we're going to ask them to do both. But they've given every indication that they can handle that."

Someone has to be listed first, but the truth is that any of the Tide's three scholarshipped tight ends could start. In fact smart money will bet on multiple starters during the season. Based on his ability and an outstanding spring practice, David Cavan gets an ever-so-slight nod for first-string. At 6-4, 259 pounds, Cavan has prototype size for the position, and the junior especially excels as a receiver. Cavan started the first two games last season, scoring one touchdown, before a concussion sidelined him for several games. His father, Pete (1975-77) played halfback for Bama.Ungerer will handle them this fall, but Sparky Woods spent spring practice coaching the Tide tight ends. "David Cavan is the ideal receiver and a good blocker," Woods said. "I'm a real David Cavan fan. He can go in motion and get in front of people and play on the run. At the same time he can line up and compete as a blocker. He gets down the field deep. He runs fast for a tight end, and he's got good hands."

Also deserving of a starting role, Clint Johnston has become a fan favorite. Johnston played in every game as a redshirt freshman last season, starting four times. He is a weight-room warrior, who also displays good hands as a receiver. "Clint is versatile and will be very important in this offense," Woods said. "He's a great team player. He gives us the ability to be an on-the-line blocker or off-the-line. He can move like a running back, and he is a good pass receiver. Clint is a very smart guy. He can do about anything you want."

Senior Donald Clarke actually started in more games last season than either Cavan or Johnston. He played in 11 of Bama's 13 games, starting six, including the last three. He finished with seven catches for a remarkable 21.9 yards per reception, but he's probably the Tide's best pure blocker at the position. Woods said, "Blocking could be more of Donald's role, though he catches the ball very well. He's smart and has a lot of experience. He doesn't run quite as fast as the others, but he's bigger and stronger. Plus, he's experienced. Donald will be a help to us when we play two tight ends."

Walk-ons Ted Gryska and Rusty Hill worked at tight end in the spring. Gryska is the grandson of Clem Gryska, who played for Alabama in the 1940s and went on to a lengthy coaching career under Paul Bryant. Barrett Earnest, a big receiver expected to grow into a tight end, will join the squad as a walk-on this fall.

WIDE RECEIVER

The hiring of former Alabama Assistant Coach Charlie Harbison was greeted with praise from Bama's players, but some outside the program may have wondered at the assignment. Harbison's recent resume includes two SEC championships (Alabama 1999, LSU 2001), and both those stints involved coaching defensive backs. Mike Shula hired Harbison to coach receivers.

Harbison understands the concern, but he's not worried. "Coaching is coaching," he said. "I've worked against wide receivers the past several years, so it won't be a problem switching over to offense. I know what it takes to succeed on either side of the football. I've worked against receivers almost all my coaching life. I know their strengths and their weaknesses."

Several youngsters with promise play the position as well, but the majority of Bama's proven receivers will be playing their final season at Alabama this year. "Having six senior receivers is the good news," Rader said. "The bad news is we have six seniors, meaning we'll have to recruit and develop other players quickly."

Alabama intends to take advantage of the talent while it's available. Rader said, "We'll rely on them in the early games when our offense will be tested for the first time. We've relied on their experience this summer in preparing for the year. They'll be our leaders, as they should."

Senior wide receiver Zach Fletcher has been a big-play football player.

Due to the Franchione offensive philosophy, not one Tide receiver finished ranked nationally. Bama's pass efficiency rating was respectable (37th in the nation), but the Tide didn't throw the ball enough for any receiver to rack up big numbers. But in 2003 that could change. "We'll rely on our receivers to make big plays," Rader said. "In the offense we're developing, they had better be ready to make big plays, because we're going to count on them."

Rader says the new Tide offense will need from six to eight receivers for its playing rotation, with a minimum of six. Luckily four players–Triandos Luke, Dre Fulgham, Zach Fletcher and Antonio Carter–enter the year with legitimate SEC credentials, while Brandon Greer and Lance Taylor have seen playing time.

Triandos Luke was Bama's leading receiver last season, hauling in 41 passes for 482 yards. A starter in every game, he had two touchdown receptions and was one of the Tide's most consistent receivers. Luke has good but not great straight-ahead speed, but the senior is very smart, displaying good instincts for the game.

Listed at 6-1, 225 pounds, Dre Fulgham is one of the strongest receivers in the nation. He holds the record for his position with a bench press of 455 pounds. Fulgham played in every game last season, starting four. He finished as the Tide's third-leading receiver with 505 yards on 30 catches and three touchdowns. Fulgham is especially effective across the middle.

After sitting out last season with a stress fracture in his leg, Antonio Carter returns for his senior season at The Capstone. An impressive combination of power and quickness, Carter is the prototype slotback receiver. AC's 106 career receptions ties him for fourth on Bama's career reception list, just 46 shy of Freddie Milons' career mark of 152. Setting a new record is a goal for Carter this year.

Though he only caught seven balls last season, Zach Fletcher's average of 27.6 yards per catch and two touchdowns set him apart as a big-play receiver. Tall and fast, the senior excels at deep post patterns that stretch opposing defenses. All but one of his receptions went for 24 yards or longer, and two of his catches (both from Brodie Croyle) went for 50 yards or more. Fletcher could end up as a starter.

Just slightly behind that top four, seniors Brandon Greer and Lance Taylor both want to finish their Tide careers strong. Greer saw action in every game last season, catching his first pass against Vanderbilt. He's been primarily used as a blocker, but Greer has good hands and can catch the ball in traffic. A fifth-year senior, Taylor has stuck it out for five years as a walk-on. Lance's father, James Taylor, was a standout for Coach Bryant from 1973-75. Taylor has mostly seen action on special teams. He both blocked a punt and returned a blocked punt for a touchdown in last year's Oklahoma game. Taylor holds the weight-lifting record for Tide receivers in the squat (525) and hang clean (365).

Redshirt freshmen Marcus McKnight and Brandon Brooks, junior Tarry Givens, and true freshman Scoop McDowell are the other returning receivers most likely to contend for playing time this fall. McKnight is a lanky youngster with very good speed. In order to earn minutes he'll need to continue to add bulk and strength while working on his consistency. At 5-4, 162 pounds, Brooks is the smallest athlete on the squad, but he's jitterbug quick and dangerous in the open field. Standing 6-5, Givens would present a physical mismatch to opposing cornerbacks. But he won't burn anyone with his speed, and he needs to work on his consistency catching the football. A former outfielder in the San Francisco Giants minor league system, McDowell is one of the most intriguing athletes on the squad. He is blistering fast, and his 6-1 height is very good for a wideout. The potential is obviously there. All McDowell lacks is experience as a football player. He's another scholarship-quality athlete whose baseball contract is paying his way, helping Alabama weather the NCAA sanctions.

The Tide signed several quality athletes with the ability to contend at wide receiver. The best kick return prospect in the state, Matt Caddell (5-11, 170), could see action as a true freshman, especially if the Tide needs help on special teams. Tyrone Prothro (5-10, 176) has a similar skill set to Caddell. Prothro could end up at defensive back on the college level, but he displayed excellent offensive skills in high school. Like Prothro, there is also talk that William Roach (6-1, 195) could end up in the secondary. But the brother of Bama's current middle linebacker (Freddie Roach) will probably begin his college career on offense. D.J. Chambers (6-0, 180) is also a dual-threat athlete, capable of playing several positions. But Chambers is expected to start off at receiver. It's possible that any (or all) of these true freshmen could play, but given Bama's dearth of younger receivers a good bet would be for most to redshirt.

Among the most impressive walk-on receivers this past spring were Matt Miller, Matt Ragland and brothers Dennis and Derek DuBois. Miller is an excellent all-around athlete, who will likely be used on special teams. Other walk-on receivers working hard this spring were Jason Bolding, William Hold, Danny Barger, Josh Averett, David Steakley and Shawn Johnson. Andrew Bone, a former high school teammate of Brodie Croyle, will join the squad this fall.

OFFENSIVE LINE

Of all the Bama offensive assistants, Line Coach Bobby Connelly has the most reasons to smile. Three starters from last year's very good unit return. In fact juniors Wesley Britt, Justin Smiley and Evan Mathis have started alongside each other in virtually every game they've played at Alabama. Britt and Smiley were both freshmen All America players two years ago, and following last season the two line mates made several All-SEC squads. Heading into this season both athletes can claim pre-season All America honors. Dennis Alexander and J.B. Closner, who finished spring first-string at guard and center respectively, both have playing experience, Alexander as a starter.

"I do feel pretty good about my starting unit," Connelly said. "We lost two kids from last year that we'll have to replace. Like everybody else, we need to avoid injury. But if we can stay healthy I think we've got as good a front five as anybody."

The Tide's frontline players, including the five starters and two key reserves, are both talented and experienced–easily among the best in the SEC, if not the nation. But depth is at a premium. The good news is that like many offensive line coaches, Connelly doesn't use that many athletes. He explained, "It varies game to game and position by position, but we don't rotate like a defensive line rotates. There's more running on the other side of the ball. We've got enough kids in the right areas to relieve the front five and stay as fresh as we need to be to compete every Saturday."

Fifth-year senior Atlas Herrion will probably be Bama's "sixth man," its key reserve at both tackle and guard. And Matt Lomax can play either center or guard. But behind the starters and those two players, injuries and inexperience have hindered.

Connelly believes in the concept of an "iron man." "You've got to be in shape," he said. "If you're out of shape and heavy footed, that's when injuries can happen. As an offensive lineman you've got to prepare yourself to play from 65 to 80 snaps per game. And in the weight room they've got to build their bodies, so they physically can withstand a 13-game schedule, while also going through practice each week."

TACKLE

The previous staff claimed that delineating between the various positions was not important and that every Tide lineman could play any position on the offensive line. That philosophy may work with a running team, but a pass-oriented attack requires a specific skill set. Connelly said. "Our tackles need to protect our quarterback, so we need guys who can handle the speed rush of the defensive ends we're going to play against at this level. We need that more athletic, ideally taller and rangier kid on the edge. Taller is not necessarily better, but it helps. If you have a big wingspan, then you present a bit more surface for that end to run around. It helps create a natural pocket for the quarterback to step up in."

Fortunately for Bama's quarterbacks, the 2003 squad will feature two excellent tackles. Listed at 6-8, 315 pounds, Wesley Britt is a legitimate NFL prospect. "Wesley has a little of it all," Connelly said. "He's a big, tall kid, but his mobility as a big man is impressive. He has great flexibility for a kid his size. He can bend his knees and play at a lower level than a normal tall guy."

Fellow junior tackle Evan Mathis (6-5, 295) is sometimes overlooked. Successive stress fractures to first one leg and then the other hampered his effectiveness his first two seasons, but the nephew of former Tide great Bob Baumhower is a quality athlete in his own right. A former heavyweight state champion in wrestling, Mathis is one of the top all-around players on the squad. "Evan is an athletic player," Connelly said. "His biggest attribute is his athleticism. He's mobile. He's strong. And he's very good on his feet."

The third returning tackle, Atlas Herrion redshirted last season so he would be available this year as a fifth-year senior. And now with the Tide's severe depth problems, that appears to have been a brilliant decision. Herrion will be the principal backup at both offensive tackle and guard.

"Atlas' biggest attribute is athleticism," Connelly said. "He moves very well for a big kid, and he can do a lot of things. He can play a number of positions, and he probably will do so. He's going to provide some great depth. He's our sixth guy."

CENTER

One of Connelly's most important tasks this spring was finding a replacement for two-time All-SEC center Alonzo Ephraim. Before Ephraim, current graduate assistant Paul Hogan handled snaps, giving Alabama the last four consecutive all-conference snappers. "Our center is more or less the quarterback of the offensive line," Connelly said. "He has got to be smart enough to read the defense and even-tempered enough to be able to handle things in the heat of battle."

Calling the blocking schemes before delivering the snap to the quarterback, the center can make or break an offensive line. Connelly said, "The center position is the key for us right now. But J.B. (Closner) and Matt (Lomax) both had good springs. I feel like we're in good shape at center with those two guys. I'd feel good if we had to go with either one of them."

Closner and Lomax battled it out during spring, with Closner holding the edge heading into fall practice. "J.B.'s biggest thing is he's a competitive person," Connelly said. "The game means something to him. He's a guy you'd want on your side if you were in a dark alley late at night. He plays with a mean streak, which is a good thing. He's a tough cat."

Wesley Britt is an all-star candidate on what should be a talented offensive line.

At one time or another during his career, Lomax has played every position on the offensive line. "Matt can play other positions, but he's an inside, center/guard type," Connelly said. "He's got a great first step. He's quick off the football. He's a smart kid, who does a good job identifying the defenses and targeting our blocking schemes."

Walk-on redshirt freshman Cody Grammer worked extensively at center during spring drills.

GUARD

Offensive guard will again be a strong point for the Bama offense, and junior Justin Smiley leads the way on the left side. A fiery competitor who can't stand to be second-best at anything, Smiley has developed into one of the emotional leaders on the squad.

A former power-lifting champion in high school, "Big Smiles" holds the hang clean record for the football program with a lift of 440 pounds. "Justin's biggest strength is his strength," Connelly said. "He's a very physical football player. His number one attribute is intensity. He's an intense competitor."

Right guard will sport a new starter this year, but the position appears to be in good hands. Former starter Dennis Alexander grabbed the guard spot early last spring and hasn't let go. A mammoth player, Alexander has been on a mission to lose weight and has made progress toward his goal. Connelly said, "Dennis has worked very hard to get his weight down, so he can be productive on the football field for us. Dennis is a veteran. He's a strong, physical football player who can move people up front. He's a bruiser. As he loses the weight, he's getting more mobile every day."

Reserve guard Danny Martz had a solid spring, but knee surgery sidelined him for more than a month. His rehabilitation is progressing well, but until he actually returns to the playing field full speed Martz is a question mark. When healthy, Martz's strength is as a run blocker. "Danny had a good spring and got better every day," Connelly said. "He's a guy who will help with our depth at guard. His knee surgery is a setback, but he's working hard at his rehab."

Redshirt sophomores Mark Sanders (6-6, 320) and Von Ewing (6-4, 312) both have talent but need to make progress in the weight room and learning the offense. They look the part of collegiate linemen, but it takes more than a big frame to compete successfully along the line of scrimmage in the SEC. Sanders and Ewing both finished spring working at guard. If he develops, Sanders could be moved to tackle.

Without including the incoming freshmen, Bama's current depth chart is barely more than two-deep. Three linemen are set to report this fall. Normally a true freshman offensive lineman is almost a sure bet to redshirt, but Chris Capps (6-6, 260), Travis West (6-4, 295) and/or Justin Moon (6-6, 300) may not have that luxury. For the Tide to have any chance of repeating (or improving upon) last season's 10-win success, there will have to be good injury luck and "Iron Man" performance among the frontline players.

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THE DEFENSE

Continuity in staff from spring should help defense in the fall

by J.E. Lisby

Compared to their offensive teammates, the Tide defense will benefit greatly from continuity this fall. Head Football Coach Mike Shula made several changes on the offensive side, but retained the entire defensive staff. Led by Coordinator Joe Kines, all four defensive assistants worked with the players last winter and coached the squad during spring practice. "We expect to pick up where we left off in the spring," Kines said. "That will be especially important for the players. They've gone through a great deal the past several months."

Given their extremely late start, it's safe to assume that Alabama's offense will need a few games at least before hitting on all cylinders. That places the burden squarely on the defense. But given the quantity and quality of talent returning, Kines doesn't shrink from the challenge. "That's the way it usually is every year," he said. "Normally the defense starts off ahead of the offense. We'll have to be prepared for the challenge. Defense at Alabama has always been very special. The Tide teams of the past always played great defense, and that's what we intend to continue."

An Alabama native who spent a previous stint as defensive coordinator at The Capstone, Kines had in mind the historically great defenses from Crimson Tide history, led by famous names like Ken Donahue, Bill Oliver and Gene Stallings. But Kines also understands that producing a performance comparable to last season's stop unit will be no easy task. Yielding barely more than 250 yards per game, the 2002 Alabama defense finished the season rated third best in the nation and tops in the SEC. Interestingly, the two teams rated ahead of Bama, TCU and Kansas State, played two of the weaker schedules in the nation (rated 108th and 67th respectively). Alabama's schedule last season was rated the 10th toughest in the country. The Tide's rush defense gave up a stingy 80.2 yards per game, and Alabama's average of 15.4 points allowed per outing ranked fifth among all Division 1 schools.

Statistically Alabama's 2002 defense was an elite unit, but Kines dismisses the notion of pressure. "Every year it's the same," he said. "I don't care if you were great or ranked dead last, all those stats are gone. That pressure that fans talk about is the same every year. Players didn't come here to be average. Just having a winning season has never been the goal here. The goal at Alabama has always been to be the best in the country."

When it comes to a defensive philosophy, Kines is down to basics. "Every Saturday we have two things in mind: win the game and get on the bus and go home. This game hasn't changed that much–just the number of people who try to tell you how complicated it is. It's not. Football still comes down to blocking and tackling. The teams that block the best and that get off the blocks and tackle the best are going to win. And they're going to win every year."

Not surprising given his background, Kines is a big proponent of fundamentally sound defense. He believes in forcing the action and making the opponent adjust to the defense. That doesn't mean blitz-happy schemes. Kines said, "We're going to be very aggressive up front and try to do things to put pressure on the opposing offense. We're going to be able to adjust to personnel groupings and different sets from week to week. But the first thing you've got to do is be fundamentally sound. We'll base out of a 4-3. We'll play two ends, two tackles, three linebackers and a four-deep secondary, because that's the easiest front and coverage to make adjustments from. It keeps you sound while allowing you to attack the offense, instead of sitting back and just reading."

Preferring to keep his cards close to his vest, Kines is careful when talking about the specifics of schemes and strategy. But after working with his players during spring, he acknowledges the talent. "We have the makings of a good defense this season," Kines said. "We're very big up front, and I really like our linebackers. I also really like what we have at the safety position."

However, Kines worries about the leadership and production lost to the NFL draft. He said, "We do have a lot of starters back, but we lost three of the best down linemen in college ball last year. If you take the snaps that those three guys played, that's a lot of lost yardage, a lot of tackles, a lot of sacks. If you pull that production out, then somebody has got to take up the slack. Somebody has to replace those snaps. That's been our biggest challenge this off season, finding replacements so that we can pick up where we left off in 2002."

Kines' years coaching defensive football have taught him a few things. No one–not even veteran coaches–can teach speed. And talented football players perform best when running full out. "We've got the talent," Kines said of this year's squad. "We'll get up the field and force the action. We'll be fundamentally sound. We'll attack the

2003 Defensive Depth Chart

Left End (Odom is a potential first-round NFL draft choice)
Antwan Odom, Leslie Williams, Chris Harris, P.J. Fletcher, Todd Bates (ineligible)
Nose Tackle (Bryant needs to develop a mean streak to dominate)
Anthony Bryant, Jeremy Clark, Dominic Lee, John Bevel
Defensive Tackle (Childress has pro potential)
Ahmad Childress, Kyle Tatum, Taylor Britt, J.P. Adams
Right End (McKay-Loescher is now recovered from spring illness)
Nautyn McKay-Loescher, Mark Anderson, Jonathan Brunson, Keith Saunders
Strongside Linebacker (Wortham and Ryans are best 1-2 combo in the league)
Cornelius Wortham, Demeco Ryans, Juke King, Earnest Nance
Middle Linebacker (both Roach and Pope were listed as starters last year)
Freddie Roach, Derrick Pope, Brandon Dean
Weakside Linebacker (Daniels could finish as Bama's top tackler of all time)
Brooks Daniels, Juwan Garth, Terrence Jones
Left Cornerback (Madison is short but hardly small)
Anthony Madison, Thurman Ward, Roberto McBride, Eric Gray
Right Cornerback (Peprah is a big play corner)
Charlie Peprah, Ramzee Robinson, David Scott, Chris Felder, Eric Packer
Strong Safety (Harper has the tools to be an all-star)
Roman Harper, Carlos Andrews, Demarcus Waldrop
Free Safety (Jones may be SEC's most underrated defender)
Charles Jones, Chris James, Sammie Autrey

offense. But we'll turn the kids loose and let them play."

Here's a look at the 2003 Alabama defense by position:

DEFENSIVE LINE

Alabama's defensive linemen will benefit from individual attention. The unit has been divided in half. Former Texas A&M Coach Buddy Wyatt coaches the tackles and Paul Randolph, who came from West Virginia, tutors the ends. Prior to joining the Alabama staff both men were accustomed to handling the entire defensive line by themselves, but Randolph likes the new arrangement. "Working with Coach Wyatt has been a good thing," Randolph said. "I'm learning what he's teaching his guys. We're exchanging knowledge and working with each other. Two heads are always better than one. I've enjoyed it. I can spend all my time at one position. It's helped me get the point across, making sure the players learn."

With three of last year's starters now plying their trade in the NFL, Alabama has some major holes to fill on the defensive line. Jarret Johnson, Kenny King and Kindal Moorehead are no longer taking care of Bama's defensive business. Talented players return to take over, but Wyatt knows the transition won't be easy. "Those guys are gone now," he said. "Now we have to rely on some guys who don't have a whole lot of experience. We've got to get the new guys to where they're playing like veterans."

Part-time starters in 2002, Antwan Odom and Nautyn McKay-Loescher will handle the two defensive end slots, but both starting tackles will be newcomers. And though talented, much of the depth at all four positions is inexperienced. "I think there are going to be enough players," Randolph said. "There is no way to get ready other than to get numerous reps in practice, and they got that this spring. That helped our depth."

But as Randolph pointed out, Bama's young defensive linemen can at least take comfort in knowing that they're not likely to come up against anything worse on Saturdays than what they face in practice every day. "There's no substitute for experience and during spring those young guys got thrown into the fire," Randolph said. "But I told them 'Look, you're going against the best O-Line in

Brooks Daniels Is Among Best Ever

by Steve Wilson

At a school known for great linebackers, Brooks Daniels has earned his place among the best in Alabama football history. A two-year starter at weakside linebacker, he is the first Bama linebacker to record 100 tackles in consecutive seasons.

Daniels was part of the recruiting riches mined out of Florida in 1999 and 2000 and has emerged as a prime-time performer at The Capstone.

While not the prototypical size for a linebacker at 6-2, 205, Daniels gives the Tide defense game-breaking speed on the weak side. Coupled with his almost ESP-like ability to flow to the ball carrier, excellent coverage skills and hard-hitting attitude, Daniels plays much bigger than his frame.

"Size doesn't matter on the outside," Tide Defensive Coordinator and Linebackers Coach Joe Kines said. "The good linebacker has the ability to tell from the flow of the play where the ball will be and place himself in a position to make the play. Brooks does that very well."

Daniels emerged in 2001 with a monster breakout year. As a senior Daniels will be a major part of a linebacking corps considered by most observers to be the best in the SEC.

He passed up a chance at lucrative money in the NFL to return for his senior year and accomplish his goal of becoming the first Alabama linebacker to tally three consecutive 100-tackle seasons. Daniels will likely be moved to safety in the NFL, where his speed and hitting ability will make him a highly coveted asset. But for one more season he will key the Tide defense from linebacker.

Daniels was like many talented athletes in high school in that he played nearly every position. At Hamilton County in Jasper, Florida, Daniels saw time under center as a quarterback. As a kick return specialist he had eight touchdowns in his junior season. At his natural position of linebacker, he tallied 200 tackles over a two-year span, with 35 of them for losses. One of those tackles was a stunning hit on future Tide receiver A.C. Carter. Carter fielded a punt and found Daniels ready to greet him. Daniels hit Carter so hard that Carter's helmet popped off like a champagne cork, leaving the speedy receiver dazed.

So fast was Daniels, who was timed at 4.39 in the 40-yard dash, that he was a standout in track, competing in both the 4x100 relay (as the anchor leg) and the 200-meter dash, where he recorded a blazing time of 22.0.

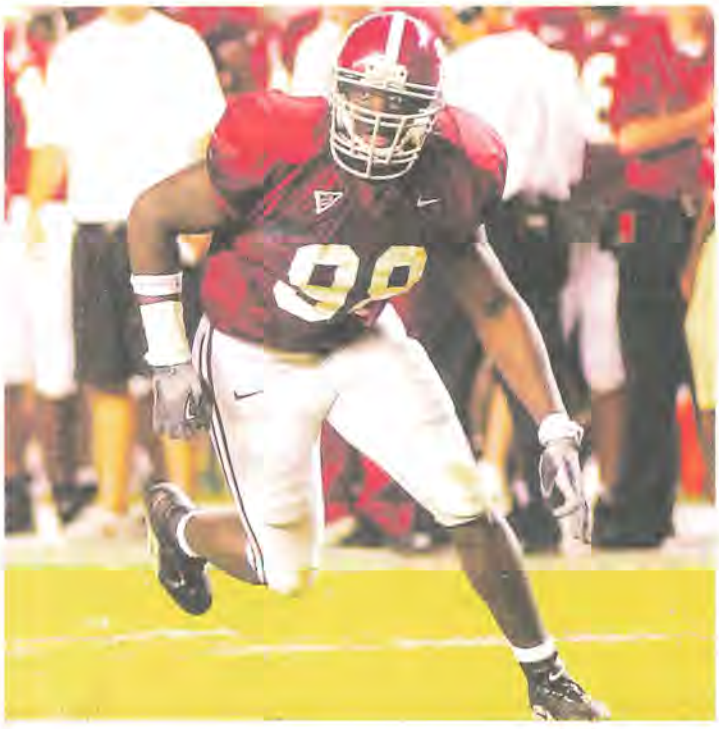
Daniels was one of the hottest linebacking prospects in the Southeast. Recruiting service Prepstar had him listed as the fourth best linebacker in the Southeast, while Superprep listed him as an All-America and the number eight prospect in Florida. Although he grew up a Florida State fan, when the Seminoles only lightly recruited him Daniels looked elsewhere to continue his career. He didn't have an easy time making a decision. By his own admission he changed his mind three times trying to decide between Alabama, Georgia and Clemson. The opportunity for early playing time and the environment at The Capstone helped him make his decision for Bama.

After seeing spot duty in every game in his first campaign in Tuscaloosa in 2000, Daniels caught the eye of the coaching staff the following spring with his hitting ability and quickness. He then ascended up the depth chart. Former Tide defensive coordinator Carl Torbush utilized Daniels in the rover position, taking maximum advantage of his skills by funneling the plays to the hard-hitting and speedy young linebacker. Daniels earned both the "Woodrow Lowe Most Improved Linebacker" and the "Lee Roy Jordan Headhunter" awards following that spring.

The 2001 campaign was the first time he tallied over 100 tackles with a 102-stop performance as a sophomore. For the first time since 1978, two linebackers (Daniels and Saleem Rasheed) both finished with over 100 tackles. Daniels racked up six double-figure tackle games, including a career-high 16 stops against Ole Miss. In the Tide's final six games, he averaged an astounding 11.5 stops per game.

The following spring, Daniels again earned the accolades of the coaching staff, winning for the second consecutive spring the "Lee Roy Jordan Headhunter Award." In 2002, Daniels raised the bar a bit higher for himself as he notched a career-high 110 stops and started a club of one as the first Tide player to record consecutive 100-tackle seasons. Daniels racked up five double-figure stop games including 12 against Auburn and a career-high tying 16 against Middle Tennessee in the season opener.

Daniels admits a third straight 100-tackle season is one of his personal goals this season. "I definitely want to accomplish that this year," Daniels said. "And I also want to step up and be a leader."



Antwan Odom may be the most gifted football player on this year's Alabama Crimson Tide team.

the SEC every day.' It's not like they'll have to worry about stepping up to the SEC level. If you can play against our offensive line, then you can play against anybody in the conference."

End

So long as Odom and McKay-Loescher stay healthy, Randolph doesn't worry about his starters. But his only experienced backup, Todd Bates, will be forced to sit out the season due to his use of a strength supplement that included a banned ingredient. Randolph said, "I feel good about my top two guys, and I feel good about the guys that I'll have rotating into the game. Everybody is competitive. The young guys think they should be starting, which is exactly what you want. You don't want someone thinking 'My time is next year.' I want them pushing this year. That competition at defensive end is going to help the guys be better players."

Odom's 10 quarterback sacks led last year's team in that category and placed him second in the SEC. He also was credited with 42 tackles and 11 quarterback pressures. Standing 6-5 and weighing a rock-solid 273 pounds, Odom runs extremely well, making him probably the top professional prospect on the team. "Antwan's chief assets are size, strength, speed and agility," Randolph said. "Antwan is immensely talented. His size coupled with his ability is going to allow him the opportunity to make the big plays. It's all laid out for him this year, and he understands that. That's pressure that he's been waiting for. Antwan wants to be the best lineman to ever come out of Alabama, and he's going to work to that end."

Since arriving at Alabama four years ago from Toronto, Canada, McKay-Loescher has become a fan favorite. Nicknamed "the Chief," he is a classic example of a player who goes full-speed on every play. It's common for McKay-Loescher to catch up to the action from across the field, making the tackle on a play that most linemen would have given up on. "Strength and tenacity and football awareness are Nautyn's strengths," Randolph said. "Nautyn has a great motor. He's a hard worker, and he'll work from sunup to sundown. He plays extremely hard, extremely aggressive. Nautyn is going to make plays that he shouldn't make. Tackles and sacks are going to come because of his high motor."

Filling out the playing rotation at defensive end, Leslie Williams, Mark Anderson and Chris Harris don't have a lot of game experience, but raw talent isn't a problem. "Leslie runs like the wind," Randolph said. "His strength is his speed and his ability to pass rush. But perhaps surprisingly he played the run well for a guy his size." Williams stands 6-5 but has yet to top the 225 mark in college. Nevertheless the senior is especially adept rushing the passer. "He's the man now," Randolph said. "He's got to shoulder some of the responsibility for us being a great defense."

Anderson spent last season at outside linebacker, but after moving to the line the second half of spring practice he earned a reputation as a star in the making. "Mark is young, but he's got a lot of ability," Randolph said. "He's agile; he's quick; he's fast. He's a natural pass rusher. I see him at 255 or 260 (pounds) in two years and being a heckuva football player."

Redshirt freshman Chris Harris has prototype size for the position. "He looks the part and he runs well too," Randolph said of Harris. "He'll fight you at the drop of a hat. Chris can't stand to have an offensive lineman's hands on him, which is a good thing for a defensive lineman. He's young, but that doesn't mean we aren't going to count on him."

Several walk-on athletes worked at defensive end during the spring, but Jonathan Brunson was good enough to be listed third string. "Jonathan is what Alabama football is about," Randolph said. "He's a young man who gave up scholarship money and playing time elsewhere to walk on and play for the Crimson Tide."

Walk-on Adam Bass also worked at defensive end during spring. Will Hardy, Kyle Dyer and P.J. Fletcher were moved to the position at the conclusion of spring drills. Walk-ons Wallace Gilberry Matt Collins, Will Denniston and Justin Johnson will join the squad this fall.

Tackle

On many teams the inside down linemen aren't expected to make the play. The design of the defense means their job is to take up space, occupying blockers so other players can make the tackle. But Wyatt sees things differently. "We want our guys to make the play," he said. "We want to disrupt the line of scrimmage and make them adjust to us. We don't want guys to be slugmugs or just occupy space. We want to penetrate and pressure the quarterback."

As a former pro lineman, Wyatt understands how valuable a playmaker on the inside can be. And he thinks he's got several athletes capable of filling that role. "If you try to block us with one man, that's going to be a mismatch," Wyatt said. "I tell my guys 'Either demand a double team or you make the play. If they block you with two men, we'll take that exchange. Someone else will be free. But if they try to block you with one man, we should win that battle every time.'"

At a minimum Wyatt needs four players to fill out his rotation at defensive tackle. Start with Anthony Bryant and Ahmad Childress, then add Jeremy Clark, Kyle Tatum and Taylor Britt to the mix, and the goal is within reach.

Both Bryant and Childress saw extensive action last year as backups. Bryant is probably the overall strongest athlete on the squad. The weight room coaches say there is no limit to Bryant's strength, and at 6-3, 340 pounds plus, Bryant has all the physical tools to dominate on the inside. According to Wyatt, he just needs to turn the corner mentally. "For his size and ability there really shouldn't be anyone in the Southeastern Conference who can block him," Wyatt said. "I don't think he's figured out the tools that he has. He's been blessed with amazing talent. Mentally he hasn't figured out that all he has to do is turn the switch on high, and there will be nobody in this conference that will be able to handle him."

Taller though not quite as strong as Bryant, Ahmad Childress finished spring as the Tide's top defensive tackle. "Ahmad is a little nastier than Anthony," Wyatt said. "To dominate this year he's got to get in the best shape of his life. This year he'll have to play more than he did last year. He can't count on someone else to get the job done. Week in and week out he's got to

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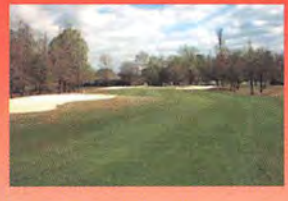

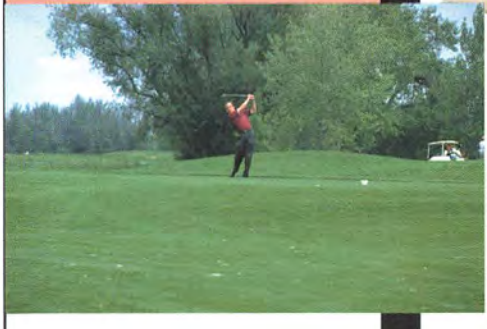

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Upcoming senior Derrick Pope has been a big play defender for the Crimson Tide as the co-first team middle linebacker.

be more productive than he was last year."

Redshirt freshmen Jeremy Clark and Kyle Tatum sat out last year working to add strength and bulk. "Before it's all said and done Jeremy and Kyle will be special," Wyatt said. "They're good, young football players. You'd like to be in a position where you wouldn't necessarily count on them as much as we're going to need them, so they're going to have to grow up fast." Taylor Britt sat out last season after transferring from UAB. The brother of offensive tackle Wesley Britt, he'll be given every chance to earn a spot in the playing rotation.

Walk-on J.P. Adams has a solid chance at playing time. A former defensive end, he has worked hard to bulk up to play on the inside. Wyatt said, "We need guys like that to jump up and surprise us." Senior walk-on John Bevel worked at tackle in the spring. Another walk-on possibility, Gerritt Jordan must sit out this season after transferring. If true freshman Dominic Lee reports in good condition, he'll be a leading contender to see action this season.

LINEBACKER

With every starter returning from a unit that was very good last year, there are essentially no worries facing Alabama at the linebacker position. Even the coaching change won't present an obstacle. With Joe Kines taking over where his longtime friend Carl Torbush left off, the unit shouldn't miss a beat. "From the start I've been very impressed with the players," Kines said. "Carl did a great job with these kids. They're well-coached and fundamentally sound."

As evidence, outside linebackers Brooks Daniels and Cornelius Wortham were first and second on the 2002 team in tackles. Derrick Pope and Freddie Roach, who essentially shared the middle linebacker position last season, finished fifth and sixth. "I think we're deep at linebacker," Kines said. "And it's quality depth, too. It's not shallow. They can be as good as any unit out there."

STRONGSIDE

Designated "strongside" because they most often line up over the tight end, Cornelius Wortham and Demeco Ryans are as good a one-two linebacking punch in the nation. Since taking over the

number one spot early in his sophomore year, Wortham has maintained a stranglehold on the starting position. A weight-room warrior, his 95 tackles last season were second on the team. "Making tackles is just my job," Wortham said. The powerful senior is poised for another standout year. "With our outside linebackers we've actually got a couple of guys with a shot at 100 tackles and having an excellent senior year," Kines said.

Backup Demeco Ryans was one of only two true freshmen to see action last season. He received the Iron Man Trophy this past spring as the strongest player in his weight group. Ryans is a good enough athlete to play any of the three linebacker positions. Sophomore Juke King suffered a serious knee injury during spring drills. His rehabilitation is going well, but he probably won't return to full strength until a few weeks into the season. King played some fullback last season but is believed likely to remain on defense. True freshman Earnest Nance could play either outside linebacker position, but given Bama's depth he's likely to redshirt.

MIDDLE

Alabama listed both Freddie Roach and Derrick Pope as starters at middle linebacker last season, and given their mutual talent and production that was a fair designation. While only one can start, both will receive plenty of playing time. In 2002 Pope totaled 65 tackles, Roach 63. Roach had five quarterback hurries, Pope three. Each had one sack, one interception, two forced fumbles and one fumble recovery.

At 6-2, 240 pounds, Roach has prototype size for middle linebacker. This summer he's been working to lose weight to increase his speed and quickness. Roach finished 2002 weighing more than 250 pounds, but he wants to play at 235 this year. Only a sophomore, Roach enjoys contact and knows how to punish a running back. For his part, Pope has the speed to play any of the linebacker positions. After joining the team last season as a junior-college transfer, he immediately displayed a knack for making the big play.

Kines said, "I know this about a great linebacker. There is a ton of it that's instinctive, and a lot of their success has to do with the system you put them in. We're going to try to take the good ones and put them in a position where they can make plays. We're going to take the bridle off and let them run."

WEAKSIDE

With one more 100-stop season, Brooks Daniels will become the first player in Crimson Tide defensive history to break the century mark for tackles three straight years. Despite being undersized for the position, Daniels is a bruising tackler with a nose for the football. He briefly considered leaving school early for the NFL. If he can stay healthy Daniels has a chance to make a name for himself as one of Alabama's all-time best linebackers. "I've been extremely lucky to be around some of the great ones in this game," Kines said. "The worst thing that you can do is over-coach a linebacker. Being a linebackers coach is like being a jockey–you guide the horse during the week and turn him loose when the gates open on Saturday."

The heir apparent to Daniels on the weakside, Juwan Garth is one of the best all-around athletes on the squad. A combination track, basketball, and football star in high school, Garth has athletic talent to spare. The only thing Garth (6-3, 204) needs is added bulk and experience.

Incoming freshman Terrence Jones is likely to start off at weakside linebacker. Walk-ons Brandon Dean, Allen Long, Matt McMullin, King Gladney and David Simmons competed at linebacker this spring.

SECONDARY

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Based on a complicated formula that includes completion percentage, passes intercepted, yards allowed per completion and touchdown passes, the Tide ranked a solid 16th in the nation in terms of Pass Efficiency Defense (4th in the SEC). Defensive Backs Coach Chris Ball has a simple philosophy for this year's unit. "We want to get the ball back for the offense as many times as possible," he said. "We don't like to give up touchdown passes. We want to be very aggressive defending both the pass and the run. We want to develop a very aggressive secondary, a physical group."

It's been awhile since Alabama fielded a secondary that struck fear in opposing quarterbacks. But Ball believes Bama can be a ball-hawking unit. "You give your offense the ball back extra times with interceptions and takeaways," he said. "We're going to practice hard and play hard. We're going to pick the ball off and then do something with it. My goal for the unit is to set the season interception record here. It's 25 in a year, but I definitely want these guys to break that mark."

Last year's defense picked off 18 passes with defensive backs accounting for 15. To accomplish Ball's goal the athletes will definitely have to step their play up a notch, but the Bama coaches believe they've got the talent to do it. "How hard we work this summer will determine how good we are this fall," Ball said. "But we've got a great chance to be very good. We're confident we can cover."

Cornerback

Like any good defense the Tide will utilize different coverages during the season, but Ball believes his cornerbacks have the ability to lock up on their receiver man-to-man. He said, "The better corners a defense has and the more man coverages you can use, allows you to do more things. I'm not afraid to play man-to-man. We'll disguise things to confuse the offense, but on the outside our corners are pretty much locked on their man."

The Tide lost two starting cornerbacks, Gerald Dixon and Hirchel Bolden, to NFL free agency. Sophomore Charlie Peprah, a part-time starter last season, and junior Anthony Madison finished spring on top of the depth chart. Peprah is a big-play athlete, always looking for a chance to pick off the pass. He finished the season with four interceptions, tying him for the team lead. Peprah's interception and touchdown return against Georgia was one of the highlights of 2002. "He's got a lot of tools," Ball said. "And he's got a great nose for the football. As he matures and watches film and learns the game, he'll get better and better. Charlie's got the size and athletic ability to be as good as anybody in the country."

At only 5-9, Madison might be considered too short to be an effective cornerback. But pound-for-pound he's one of the strongest players on the team and nobody will outwork him. "Anthony is probably the hardest working kid I have back there," Ball said. "He only knows one speed. He goes 100 miles per hour on every play. He's aggressive. He flies around. If a cornerback is strong and plays big and he can jump, which Anthony can, then height doesn't bother you. I think he's going to be a great player."

Redshirt freshman Ramzee Robinson had a very good spring and will be the first cornerback off the bench. On passing downs he'll be Bama's nickel back. Ball said, "He's still learning the position, but Ramzee is going to have to play a lot of football for us in the fall. His spring mistakes were just from lack of experience. As far as ability goes, Ramzee's got as much as anybody."

Three talented veterans back up that top group. Senior David Scott had an excellent spring game, picking off one pass and playing smothering defense all scrimmage long. Junior Thurman Ward and senior Roberto McBride will also battle for playing time at cornerback. "Having guys as talented as Thurman and Roberto and calling them 'third string' helps a lot," Ball said.

Incoming freshman Eric Gray, along with Eric Packer and Chris Felder are all likely redshirts. Veteran walk-ons Charles Hosea and Ben Rose continue to compete.

Safety

Traditionally safetymen have been defined with the "free" (or "weak") safety designated mainly for pass defense and the "strong safety" crowding the line of scrimmage to help against the run. But Bama will use a different approach. Ball said, "Our safeties are very similar, and to a degree they're the same. Each guy will have times when he drops down to help with the run. It's just a matter of where the tight end lines up. Different blitzes and different coverage schemes will also determine who drops down. That keeps opposing quarterbacks from reading our coverages and picking on a certain guy."

Waine Bacon, Bama's strong safety in 2002, is now covering receivers for the Atlanta Falcons, but last year's starting free safety returns. Senior Charles Jones will be the unit leader. His 85 tackles and three interceptions last year placed him third on the team in both categories. "Charles is smart; he knows the game," Ball said. "He's played in the SEC and understands coverages. His strength is his football savvy. Charles adds maturity to the group, and we'll need that."

Sophomore Roman Harper will be playing the so-called "strong safety" position, but Harper is fast enough to play anywhere in the secondary. He needs to add bulk to help against the run, but Harper has the look of a good one. Ball said, "There is a ton of potential with Roman. He has all the tools. He knows the coverages, and he's not afraid to hit you. If he gets in the weight room and really works hard, Roman can be a player in this league."

Held back in previous seasons by injuries and sometimes by a lack of conditioning, strong safety Carlos Andrews has yet to live up to his potential. But 2003 could be his year. He was very impressive in the A-Day game and his improvement gives Ball a crucial third man at safety. "Carlos is on a mission," Ball said. "He wants to play. He'll definitely be in the mix." Junior Chris James doesn't even resemble the skinny athlete who arrived on campus three years ago. He finished spring practice second string at free safety. Thurman Ward will also work at safety.

Carlos Andrews had an impressive spring and could be a key for Bama at safety this year.

Walk-on Sammie Autrey played well enough to finish spring drills third string at strong safety. Walter Smith runs very well. Matt Grice, Corbin Pardue, Darrell Owens, Ryan Wilbanks, Danny Jordan, Bryan Kilpatrick, Corey Harris and Josh Taylor also competed in the secondary during spring. Incoming freshman Demarcus Waldrup could play either safety or linebacker, but if he sees action this season it'll likely be in the secondary.

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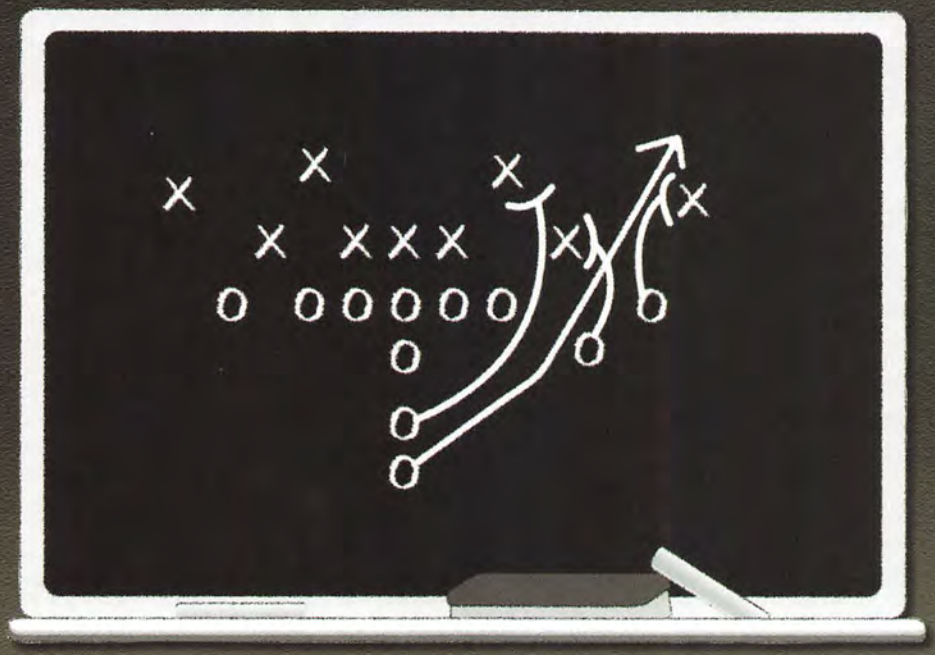

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After poor play in past two years, expectations for kicking are high

SPECIAL TEAMS

by J.E. Lisby

Having spent most of his coaching career on the East Coast, new Alabama Special Teams Coordinator Dave Ungerer (pronounced UN-gur) speaks with a decidedly "foreign" accent. But it's not so much how one says it, but rather what one says–and does. For the past two years Alabama coaches talked a good special teams game, but game results were horrendous. Ungerer's coaching credibility should be very well received. "My philosophy for our special teams is simple," Ungerer said. "We want to dictate to the other team. We want to make big plays that turn the game around. When you take them all together, special teams plays come close to a third of the game. So you can't afford to waste any opportunity to make something happen."

The previous staff said all the right things regarding the importance of the kicking game, but unfortunately the on-the-field results were lacking. Thanks to the heroic efforts of Lane Bearden last year, Alabama was respectable punting the football. And the Tide's punt coverage also was good. But Alabama rated no better than 78th nationally returning kickoffs and 82nd fielding punts. Plus, kickoff coverage was not good. Tide opponents averaged 23.3 yards per kickoff return, a number comparable to the top schools in the country.

With almost 20 years experience coaching special teams, Ungerer knows you can't get the job done with platitudes and promises. He said, "The biggest difference between coaching special teams compared to offense or defense is there are no second chances. On offense if your first down play doesn't gain, you've got two more chances to make that ten yards. If your defense gives up a pass play, you've still got a chance to hold them out of the endzone. But on special teams you get one shot and the opportunity is over. You either make a big play or you have to wait until the next chance."

At every stop of his career Ungerer has specialized in special teams. Ungerer came to Alabama after coaching one season at California. In his short tenure with the Golden Bears, California finished ranked first in kickoff returns in the Pac-10 and fifth nationally. California's punt returns ranked fourth in the conference. The California placekicker finished the season rated 12th best in the nation (Alabama was not ranked). In all, Ungerer's 2002 special teams accounted for six plays of 50-yards or more and four touchdowns. Cal's LaShaun Ward set the school record for kickoff return yards in a season with 806 yards.

Obviously talent plays a role, especially when it comes to individual measures like kick returns and punting. But teams that give only lip service to special teams preparation rather than assigning their best coaches to the task will inevitably pay the price on the field. "Talent is important, but you can't underestimate the importance of coaching," Ungerer said. "Fans think special teams is just about running down field as fast as you can, but there is a lot of planning involved. You have to work hard, coming up with schemes and plays that will work against what the other team is doing. If you've got a team that consistently helps itself on kickoff and punt returns, then there is good coaching involved."

When Mike Shula was assembling his Alabama staff, he used the same philosophy on special teams as he did on defense and offense. In Joe Kines and Dave Rader, Shula found talented and experienced coordinators. And he did the same for the Tide kicking game. Ungerer said, "I've worked with special teams most of my career, so this is a good fit. Coach Shula was looking for someone to come in and take the responsibility of handling special teams."

A long return in the kicking game can set the offense up with a short field, but nothing turns a game around more quickly than a blocked kick. "Blocking kicks definitely doesn't happen by accident," Ungerer said. "You have to spend hours watching film of your opponent. You look for things that will work against their protection schemes. I enjoy scheming, planning what will work from week to week. You scout your opponent, looking for weaknesses. Then you come up with a plan to exploit them. My teams have always had a reputation for blocking kicks, and I expect that to continue at Alabama."

Identifying players able and willing to man Bama's various special teams units will be key. But it's not just a matter of finding the fastest guys on the squad. Ungerer said, "Speed on special teams is important. You can't put a bunch of slow guys out there or you'll get beat. But speed isn't the only thing. You've got to have players who are smart and understand what we're trying to do. You need players with that look in their eyes, who aren't afraid of contact. But it's not just a matter of running down the field and hitting somebody. You have to be smart. You have to understand and accept what we're trying to do with our schemes. You like players who are willing to take a hit, but they have to be able to play under control."

Bama's previous staff made a great deal out of its willingness to use starters on special teams. Ungerer isn't opposed to the idea, but he's also willing to use freshmen and other athletes who are eager to make an impact any way they can. "Some schools do use a lot of starters on special teams," Ungerer said, "and it is nice to have the best athletes out there. But you can't wear them out on special teams, or they won't be any use to you on offense or defense. I've found that fresh-

2003 Special Teams Depth Chart

Punter (this position is up for grabs)
Bo Freeland, Jeff Aul, Jeremy Schatz
Placekicker (Bama is more talented here than most fans think)
Kyle Robinson, Brian Bostick, Michael Ziifle, Mike McLaughlin, Gabe Giardina
Kickoffs (Ziifle has the strongest leg)
Michael Ziifle, Brian Bostick, Josh Woodard
Holder (travel squad limits will determine who gets this job)
Bo Freeland, Jeff Aul, Brandon Avalos
Deep Snapper (Ridings is Bama's special teams leader)
Nick Ridings, Justin Smiley, Mitch Grissett
Punt Returns (Brooks is jitterbug quick)
Brandon Brooks, Antonio Carter, Ramzee Robinson, Tyrone Prothro
Kickoff Returns (Bama needs to improve here)
Triandos Luke, Ray Hudson, Brandon Brooks, Matt Caddell

men or even walk-ons make good special teams players. They have something to prove. They're hungry. They want to get out there on the field and make the play."

Although special teams involve 11 players in each phase, here is a look at the so-called specialists. (NOTE: these evaluations are based on the 2002 season and spring practice, and both those sets of coaches are no longer coaching at Alabama.)

PLACEKICKING

Alabama used three different players last season at placekicker. Combined the Tide made 18 field goals, an average of 1.38 per game, which is about average for Division 1 football. Taken together the completion percentage was .642, sub-par but respectable. Since he was hired following the conclusion of spring drills, Ungerer has yet to work with any of the Tide athletes. But he already knows that his most important task will be to improve their confidence.

"Placekicking is more about mental than physical," he said. "You have to have a guy who can kick the ball, but just doing it in practice isn't good enough. He has to be able to come through on game day."

Brian Bostick, Michael Ziifle and Kyle Robinson all kicked for the Tide last season. A former soccer goalie, Ziifle started the season with the job. After the third game he and Bostick shared the duty. But beginning with the Ole Miss contest, the coaches turned to Kyle Robinson who held onto the job for the rest of the season. Ziifle finished 6-of-10, a perfect 3-of-3 from 40-yards plus. Bostick was 6-of-8, and Robinson was 6-of-10. Robinson's 41 points led Tide kickers in that category.

Based on spring practice Robinson and Bostick enter fall camp listed co-first team with Robinson enjoying perhaps a slight edge. Ziifle would rank third, while Mike McLaughlin, Alabama's only placekicker on scholarship, would be fourth. However, with a new coach taking over, any of the four could win the job. Robinson is a dependable kicker, not easily rattled. He has good leg strength and gets the ball up well. Bostick may have a slightly stronger leg, but he needs to

Nick Ridings Likes The Background

by Steve Wilson

It's not unusual for an athlete on a major college team to enjoy the limelight, even crave publicity. But Alabama deep snapper Nick Ridings prefers anonymity. "I tell people if I get out of here in four years without people knowing my name, I've done my job," Ridings said. "If people know my name, it's probably because I did something wrong."

For three years, Ridings has held the generally overlooked job of the long snapper for both punts and place-kicks. His seemingly routine task is more important than it might appear. A snapper must be able to both get the snap accurately into the hands of the punter or the holder, and then block a kamikaze defender crashing up the middle of the formation trying to block the kick. Without a good snap, punters find getting a kick off to be problematic. Place-kickers can have their fragile rhythm disrupted when the snap goes awry, very often missing the kick–or worse.

Ridings has a good record of good snaps. He said, "It eliminates another worry in their mind and allows the kickers to do their job."

Not once in three years of work has Ridings launched an errant snap. His consistency gives the Tide kickers a comfort zone to know that no matter the situation, the snap will be perfect. "It's a muscle memory thing," Ridings said of snapping the ball. "You just remind yourself you've done this a thousand times before."

He's an easy player to spot. Just look for the relatively small guy among the giants. "You could see it if you watch some film of last year when the field goal unit came out onto the field," Ridings said. "You see Marico Portis (6-0, 308) and Dennis Alexander (6-6, 345). Then you see this little squatty guy between them. I'm definitely down there with the big boys." This from a man 6-0, 246.

The Marietta, Georgia, native began his career at Alabama as a recruited walk-on after turning down offers from smaller colleges such as Valdosta State. Ridings found his future meal ticket one day during high school football practice as the team's snapper went down with a thumb injury.

"I gave it a try, and it really clicked with me," Ridings said.

Originally recruited as a linebacker, Riding's true calling was discovered by the Tide coaches early in his college career. "My freshman year the coaches saw that I could snap, and they started me there." Ridings said.

After a redshirt year in his first campaign in 1999, an injury to incumbent snapper Bradley Ledbetter forced Ledbetter to snap only for punts. Ready or not, the young Ridings was thrust into action. "I didn't even know I'd actually be starting until we were out at UCLA that Thursday before the game," Ridings said. "That's when I ended up doing the field goals the whole year."

Ridings split time with Ledbetter his redshirt freshman campaign in 2000. Then when Ledbetter graduated he inherited the spot. For his efforts Ridings was rewarded with a scholarship in the spring of 2001. "It was a big day for me when the coaching staff gave me that scholarship," Ridings said. "I proved something to myself and I was glad to give that back to my parents."

That season Ridings got a taste of what he later considered one of the loudest stadiums in the SEC. "South Carolina was something," Ridings said. "Saleem Rasheed was the personal protector (the up back) on punts. I couldn't hear Saleem call the cadence. I told him he was going to have to speak up because I couldn't hear him. Those folks were off their rockers up there."

Last season punter Lane Bearden tore ligaments in his knee against Arkansas, but vowed to play the rest of the season despite the injury. The brave story immediately attracted media attention. Impressed by the bravery of the wounded punter, reporters were all over the story. Ridings and the rest of Alabama's special teams unit enjoyed the attention to Bearden, but Ridings also realized the potential pitfalls of the situation.

"It was added pressure on me that Lane really couldn't go and get the snap if it was bad," Ridings said. "I would have felt horrible if he had to lunge to reach the ball."

In his job a bad snap could change a game for the worse. But one thing that's never gotten to Ridings is the pressure of crunch-time situations. He feels that most snappers err when they leave their mental comfort zone and get sucked into the situation.

"It's usually in big situations," Ridings said. "When you mess up is when you start to think about things. You just have to get in your mindset that I've done this a thousand times before and just do it."

With his career in its final year, Ridings will have to train an understudy to fill his shoes. "I'm going to have to pick up one this year, get him behind me and show him the ropes," Ridings said.

Ridings will graduate in December with a degree in management. He looks forward to a chance at the NFL, but is preparing for a job in business. "Some of my old coaches said I had the ability to snap in the NFL," Ridings said, "But if it doesn't happen, that's no big deal."

What is a big deal is the snaps Nick Ridings will make this fall. And hopefully no one will know his name.

work on his consistency. Ziifle has the strongest leg of all the contenders, but in the past he's sometimes struggled with his consistency. Some (including the previous kicking coach) believe Ziifle has tried to do too many things in the past and suggest he would benefit from concentrating on just one aspect of the kicking game. A former Parade All America, McLaughlin has good talent, and he gets the ball up quickly. But he hasn't yet beaten out the players ahead of him.

Several other walk-on athletes kicked for the Tide this spring, including Alex Fox, Gabe Giardina, Tyler Straate and Josh Woodard. William Crum, who participated in the Alabama-Mississippi All-Star game is slated to join the squad as a walk-on this fall.

DEEP SNAPPER

With fifth-year senior Nick Ridings returning for his final season at The Capstone, Alabama is sound at the deep snapping position. After redshirting his first year on campus, Ridings has played in every game for the Tide, handling all long snapping duties since 2001. A linebacker in high school, Ridings isn't the biggest athlete on the field, but he is consistently praised by the kickers for his consistency. Last season when Lane Bearden returned to punt with torn ligaments in his knee, Ridings' snaps were on the money, keeping Bearden from having to move around to field the snap. He injured his hand in a boat accident over the summer, but Ridings is expected to be ready in plenty of time for fall practice. Along with Mitch Grisset, Ridings holds the position record of 350 pounds on the hang clean.

Grisset finished spring behind Ridings in terms of deep snapping specialists. Throughout his career the junior has been a warrior in the weight room. Besides the record Grisset holds with Ridings, he owns the position record for the squat, bench press and incline bench press. Given restrictions on the size of travel rosters, Justin Smiley would probably step in and handle deep snapping duties on the road if Ridings were injured. Besides his talent as an offensive guard, Smiley could play center and is one of the best deep snappers on the team. Sophomore David Sears also worked at the position in the spring.

HOLDER

It's rare that a season doesn't go by without at least one errant snap on field goal or extra point attempts. When the worst occurs, it usually falls to the holder to improvise a saving play. Backup quarterbacks often do the job. Holders need exceptional hand-eye coordination. Ideally the snap will be on target and the holder need only catch it, spin the football so the laces are facing outward, and place the ball down. But nothing is ever perfect, least of all in the world of football. And a good holder is expected to deftly snag errant snaps–high, low or to the side–and calmly put the football down in time for the placekicker to get his attempt off.

With limitations on travel squads, holders are almost always athletes who can contribute at other positions. Last season Lane Bearden, Bama's punter, started off in the role. When he was injured wide receiver Sam Collins took over. Both Bearden and Collins have graduated, which means that a new holder must be found. Since placekickers and punters spend most of practice working together, while the position players work elsewhere, assigning a punter the extra role of holder on placekicks is an efficient (and common) decision. This past spring various kickers and punters handled the duty, with Alex Fox doing a good job. But who does and who does not make the lists for out of town trips will determine who gets picked to hold. "It'll have to be somebody who will make the traveling roster," Ungerer said. "We can't ask somebody to hold who can't also help us somewhere else."

PUNTER

As one of last year's team captains, Bearden's name and handprints are now enshrined at the foot of Denny Chimes. It was an unusual honor for a punter, but a deserving one given his courage in playing his final season with a knee injury. Bearden averaged 41.5 yards per kick last year, ranking him 48th in the nation. Obviously a punter must have a strong leg. The standard of acceptance is considered to be an average of at least 40 yards per punt. But distance isn't everything. Low line drives may push a return man backwards before fielding the punt. But a lack of hang time can mean he has out-kicked the coverage, which can lead to a long return. A punter who can boom the ball high and long, turning field position in his team's favor, is worth his weight in football gold. And playing the role of safety, a punter must also be able to make a touchdown-saving tackle when needed.

Many athletes tried out during spring, but only a handful have a legitimate shot at earning the job. Bo Freeland heads into fall ahead of the pack. The junior has a very strong leg, and he's big enough (6-5, 230 pounds) to handle tackling duties. Freeland might have become Bama's punter in 2001 (ahead of Bearden), but academic problems sidelined him. If he can improve his consistency, the job could be his. Speaking of his talent last spring, one coach said that "even Bo's mis-hits end up going far enough to keep you out of trouble."

Jeff Aul would probably be next on the depth chart. A combo kicker in high school, Aul is concentrating on punting. He displays good form but needs better distance and consistency. Despite being one of the smallest players on the team (5-9, 155), sophomore Jeremy Schatz can boom the ball. Last season Michael Ziifle was the backup punter. When Bearden was forced to miss the Georgia game because of his injury, Ziifle stepped in and did a solid job. Whether he'll continue to concentrate just on placekicking in the fall (as in the spring) remains to be seen. Freshman Joey Bearden (Lane's brother) also punted during spring. Patrick Eades of Hoover High School is expected to join the squad as a walk-on this fall.

PUNT RETURNS

Many remember the early 1990s' magic that was David Palmer in the open field, so the expectation level for punt returners at Alabama is always high. With no room for error, coaches look for sure-handed athletes who have no trace of fear. "Punt returns are mainly quickness and lateral mobility," Ungerer said. "Basically the idea is to make that first man miss and then see what you can do. As a coach you're looking for an elusive guy, not necessarily a guy with blazing speed."

Placing the emphasis on ball safety, the previous staff chose Antonio Carter (2001) and Shaud Williams (2002) to field punts. With the admonition "don't let the ball hit the ground," both players routinely ran up to field short kicks, eliminating the possibility of a long roll. And fumbles were minimized. But recently it has been rare for the Tide to enjoy the benefits of a long punt return. Last season Williams averaged 8.65 yards per return, which rated only 74th in the nation. Numerous players spent at least some time fielding punts in the spring, including Brandon Brooks, Ramzee Robinson, Roberto McBride, Thurman Ward, Anthony Madison and Shaud Williams.

Brooks is probably the most intriguing of the group. At 5-4, 162 pounds, he's the smallest player on the squad. But give him the football in the open field, and Brooks is exciting to watch. Jitterbug quick, Brooks sometimes seems to hide behind his blockers as he looks for an opening. The previous staff didn't give him a chance, so it'll be interesting to see if Brooks can earn the job this fall.

Now healed from the stress fracture that sidelined him last season, Carter has proven he can handle the role. But the coaches may prefer to protect their senior wideout and keep him off special teams. Redshirt freshman Ramzee Robinson seems ideally suited for the task. He's got the combination of speed and quickness to excel. The coaches may prefer to redshirt him this season, but incoming freshman Tyrone Prothro has the talent to play immediately.

KICKOFFS

As surely as players sweat during August two-a-days, Alabama fans everywhere are once again wondering if their team will be able to kick off into the endzone. Two factors have made that a more difficult task than in years past. First (and obviously) the kickoff line has been moved back, increasing the distance the ball must travel. But larger stadiums with enclosed endzones are also a factor, cutting off what was often a useful tailwind to push the ball in flight. But in

2003 as in recent years the question will be asked yet again: Isn't there somebody on the Alabama campus capable of kicking the ball into the endzone?

The last two years Alabama's strategy often favored placement over distance. The idea was to kick the ball to one corner or the other, pinning the return man on the sideline and theoretically helping the coverage by boxing him in. Sometimes it worked, and sometimes it didn't. Ungerer intends to keep the opposing teams guessing, but he acknowledges that there is no better coverage scheme than kicking the ball through the back of the endzone.

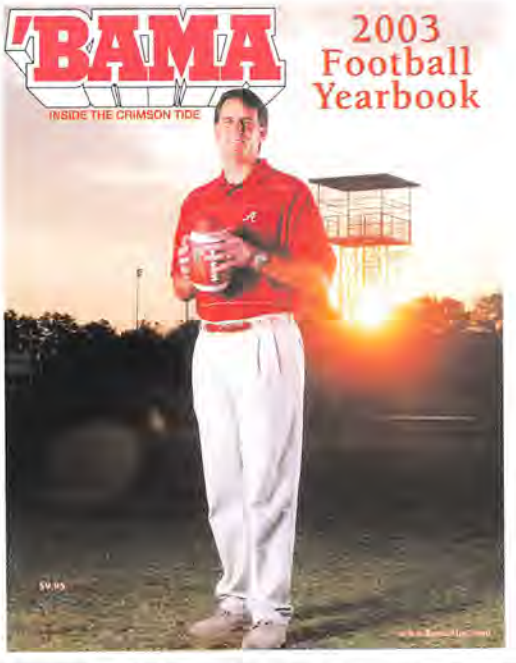
Last season Lane Bearden started the season kicking off. His tackling ability made him especially valuable as the deep safety. When he injured his knee, Ziifle and Bostick shared kickoff duties. Each had his moments, but neither was consistently outstanding in the role. Every Tide placekicker will get a look this fall, but Ziifle should be the frontrunner. Bostick is second on our depth chart with redshirt freshman Josh Woodard in the mix as well.

KICKOFF RETURNS

Last year at California Coach Ungerer's principal kickoff return man finished third in the nation, averaging 28.9 yards per effort. "There is a big difference between returning punts and kickoffs," Ungerer said. "Of course it helps when you've got a big, fast guy back there returning kicks for you. On kickoffs you want to get up the field as fast as you can, but it's also a matter of trust."

As Ungerer said, the best kickoff return man is only as good as his blockers. And a good special teams coach will come up with blocking schemes that produce extra yardage. Ungerer said, "A kickoff return man has to trust that there will be an opening where we tell him. We set up plays and blocking schemes to one side or another. When he catches the ball, he may not see the hole. But he has to trust his fellow players to do their job and create the opening."

Triandos Luke and Ray Hudson handled the duty for most of last season, with Shaud Williams getting a few chances. Hudson had the biggest gainer of the year for Alabama with a return of 39 yards. Based on spring practice reps Luke and Hudson would again be the leading contenders for the job, with Brandon Brooks another candidate. Thurman Ward, Antonio Carter and Shaud Williams are also possibilities. If he doesn't redshirt, incoming freshman Matt Caddell has the talent to make an immediate impact. As a prep senior he played on every special team, returning punts and kickoffs and finishing as one of the top return men in Alabama high school.



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Alabama's new head coach will make decisions, not suggestions

MIKE SHULA

by Kirk McNair

Much is made of the youth of Mike Shula. He is the youngest head football coach in the Southeastern Conference. Born June 3, 1965, he was just shy of 38 years old when he was named Bama's coach last May 8. He is older than only one other Division 1A head coach, a year and two days older than Rutgers' Greg Schianno. He is the youngest head coach in the modern era of Alabama football. Wallace Wade was hired in 1923 at age 31 and Frank Thomas was 33 when he was hired in 1931. Both went on to win national championships and enter the Football Hall of Fame. Alabama's most famous coach, Paul Bryant, was 32 when he accepted his first college head coaching job at Maryland in 1946.

But Mike Shula isn't going to be judged by his age. He is going to be expected to have more discipline, more courage, and more intelligence than some of those who have preceded him.

Shula is the third head coach hired by Athletics Director Mal Moore. For his first two choices, Moore went out of the "Alabama family." Dennis Franchione gave up the task after just two seasons. Mike Price didn't make it to his first season. When Moore made his third selection, he chose from three former Alabama players, all of

them assistant coaches in the National Football League. He opted for Shula over Richard Williamson and Sylvester Croom.

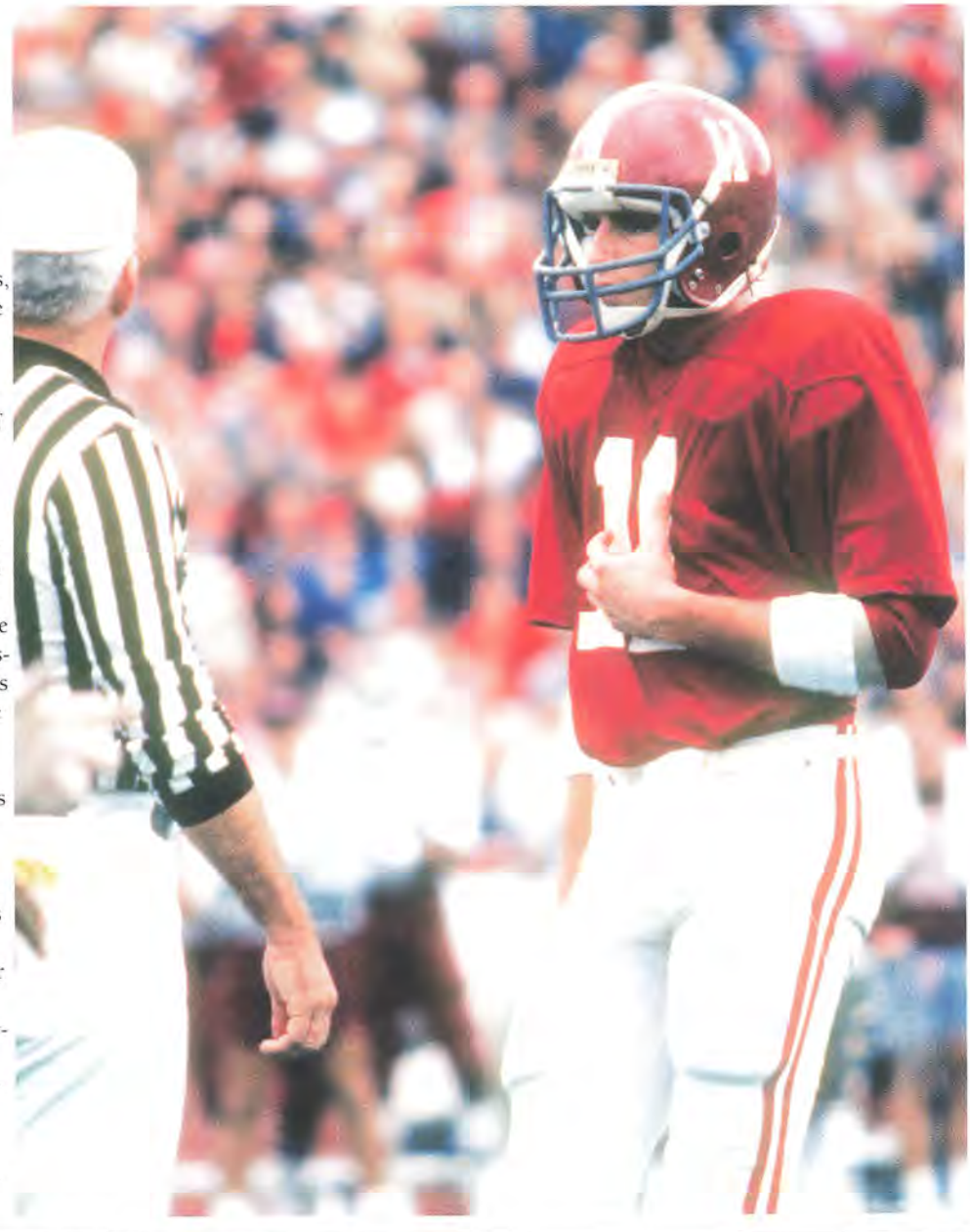
When Shula was introduced as the Tide's new head coach, the former Bama quarterback said, "I am thrilled to once again be a part of Alabama football."

Was Shula the most qualified candidate? On the basis of resume, certainly not. Nor was he nearly as qualified as his predecessors, Franchione and Price. But Moore said, "Mike brings a mixture of youth and experience to our program, while at the same time, a 15-year career in the NFL has prepared him for the step he is taking today. It was that mix of enthusiasm, experience and ties to The University of Alabama that made Mike the perfect fit for this job."

It has been pointed out that one difference between an assistant coach and a head coach is that an assistant coach makes suggestions and a head coach makes decisions. But a wise head coach will consider carefully the suggestions, and Shula appears to be doing that. His early decisions included keeping some of the Price staff and adding some coaches with whom Shula was comfortable and familiar.

With just 115 days between the day he was hired and the day Alabama opens the 2003 football season, time became precious and Shula and his staff have not wasted it. There will be time next summer for vacations. This summer has been spent with coaches working double time in an attempt to be ready for fall camp.

Shula spent the last two seasons as quarterback coach for the Miami Dolphins, after being named to that position by Coach Dave Wannstedt on February 7, 2000. It marked Shula's second stint with the Dolphins after serving as a coaches' assistant from 1991-92. It was also his second stint with Wannstedt



Mike Shula Knows About Winning

Mike Shula can tell his new Crimson Tide team something about winning. He can tell about a team on the road at Georgia, trailing 16-13 with a minute to play. And he can tell about that 1985 team going 71 yards between the hedges to a winning touchdown with 15 seconds to play. That winning score was a 17-yard Mike Shula to Al Bell pass that concluded one of the great comeback wins in Alabama history.

Or he can tell about the final regular season game that year, against Auburn in Birmingham. The Tigers seemed to have wrapped up one of the most exciting games in the history of the series. With less than a minute to play, Auburn held a 23-22 lead. Here's what 'Bama, Inside The Crimson Tide reported following the game:

"Since the T-formation was devised, big football games regularly have been won by quarterbacks. Junior Shula, poise personified, didn't score a point and didn't pass for a touchdown, but he directed what would be considered a once-in-a-lifetime winning drive. And it's the second time he's done it this season. Auburn coaches and players said after the game they knew he could do it because they had seen him do it against Georgia. [Alabama Head Coach Ray] Perkins and the Alabama players said they knew Shula could do it because he had done it against Georgia. Shula said when he went into the game with 57 seconds left, 80 yards from the Auburn goal, that it wasn't the situation he would have wanted, 'but we've been in that situation before. You can't think you're beaten until the game is over, and we didn't.' "

What Shula did was get Alabama to the Auburn 35 with six seconds to play. A key fourth down play in the drive was Bell taking the ball on a reverse and getting a block from Shula to gain 20 yards. The final offensive play in the drive was Shula calmly completing a pass to Greg Richardson over the middle, and Richardson dragging an Auburn defender out of bounds to stop the clock. With only one chance at victory, Van Tiffin made a kick for the ages, 52 yards, through the uprights, and a 25-23 Alabama win.

–Kirk McNair

after working as tight ends coach with the Chicago Bears from 1993-95.

In Shula's two seasons as quarterbacks coach, Jay Fiedler led the Dolphins to a 21-10 record as a starter. Last year, he completed 60.7 per cent of his passes and threw for 3,290 yards and 20 touchdowns. He became just the second quarterback in club history to surpass the 3,000-yard passing mark in a season and the third to tally 20 touchdown passes. His completion percentage was the highest by a Dolphin (minimum 75 completions) since 1995.

Shula re-joined the Dolphins organization after spending the previous four years (1996-99) as offensive coordinator with the Tampa Bay Buccaneers. The Bucs qualified for the playoffs in two of Shula's four seasons, and in 1999 won the NFC Central Division and reached the NFC Championship game. Shula got his initial NFL coaching post in 1988 with the Bucs as an offensive assistant. He was promoted to quarterbacks coach in 1990, and spent one year in that post.

Shula was a four-year letterman (1983-86) as a quarterback for the Crimson Tide, and finished his career with a 32-15-1 record, all under Ray Perkins. He was a starter in each of his final three seasons. Shula finished his Tide career completing 313 of 578 passes for 4,069 yards, 35 touchdowns and 30 interceptions.

Perhaps his biggest wins were against Georgia (20-16) and Auburn (25-23) in 1985 and against Southern Cal (24-3) in the 1985 Aloha Bowl, and Ohio State (16-10) in the Kickoff Classic, Notre Dame (28-10) and Washington (28-6) in the Sun Bowl, all in the 1986 season. The win over Notre Dame is the Tide's only victory in four tries against the Fighting Irish.

He was an All-SEC selection as a junior and led the Crimson Tide to victories in the Aloha Bowl and Sun Bowl in his final two seasons. As a junior, he became only the second Alabama quarterback ever to throw for more than 2,000 yards in a season.

He earned his bachelor's degree in labor relations from Alabama. Shula was a 12th-round draft choice of Tampa Bay in 1987 and was on the Bucs' roster for part of the 1987 season.

Shula is the son of former Dolphins head coach Don Shula (1970-95), the winningest coach in NFL history and a member of the Pro Football Hall of Fame. While his father was able to see Mike play only one game in person when Mike was quarterback at Alabama (the Sun Bowl win over Washington) because the elder Shula was preparing for his own games on Bama playing dates, Don Shula is now retired and can be expected to attend some Crimson Tide contests.

Mike prepped at Miami's Columbus High School where he was an all-state performer his senior season when he led the school to the state championship game. He also earned all-state accolades as a senior.

He was born on June 3, 1965, in Baltimore, Maryland. Shula and his wife, Shari, have a daughter, Samantha and are expecting their second child this fall.

The Mike Shula File

PERSONAL

Born June 3, 1965, in Baltimore, Maryland
He and his wife, Shari, have a daughter, Samantha and are expecting their second child this fall.

EDUCATION

University of Alabama, 1987
(Quarterback, lettered 1984-85-86)

COACHING CAREER

Quarterbacks Coach, Tampa Bay Bucs, 1988-90
Coaches Assistant, Miami Dolphins, 1991-92
Tight Ends Coach, Chicago Bears, 1993-95
Offensive Coordinator, Tampa Bay Bucs, 1996-99
Quarterbacks Coach, Miami Dlophins, 2000-02
Head Coach, Alabama, May 8, 2003-Present

Alabama Coaches' Records

Coach	Years	Won-Lost-Tied	Pct.
E.B. Beaumont	1892	2-2-0	.500
Eli Abbnott	1893-95, 1902	7-12-0	.368
Otto Wagonhurst	1896	2-1-0	.667
Allen McCants	1897	1-0-0	1.000
W.A. Martin	1899	3-1-0	.750
M. Griffin	1900	2-3-0	.400
M.H. Harvey	1901	2-1-2	.600
W.B. Blount	1903-04	10-7-0	.588
Jack Leavenworth	1905	6-4-0	.600
J.W.H. Pollard	1906-09	20-4-5	.776
Guy Lowman	1910	4-4-0	.500
D.V. Graves	1911-14	21-12-3	.625
Thomas Kelly	1915-17	17-7-1	.700
Xen C. Scott	1919-22	29-9-3	.744
Wallace Wade	1923-30	61-13-3	.812
Frank Thomas	1931-46	115-24-7	.812
H.D. Drew	1947-54	55-29-7	.643
J.B. Whitworth	1955-57	4-24-2	.167
Paul W. Bryant	1958-82	232-46-9	.824
Ray Perkins	1983-86	32-15-1	.677
Bill Curry	1987-89	26-10-0	.722
Gene Stallings	1990-96	70-16-1	.810
Mike DuBose	1997-2000	24-23-0	.511
Dennis Franchione	2001-02	17-8-0	.680
Totals		762-275-44	.725

Early Shula Practice

Early this summer Alabama's new head coach presided over a "practice session" involving some decidedly older "players." He and his staff, including the graduate assistants, trekked out to the Drew-Thomas practice fields for a walk-through session.

"It was an interesting walk-through," Coach Mike Shula acknowledged with a laugh. "When the players mess up and go the wrong way, we get on them in practice. But I had forgotten how easy it was to get mixed up."

Offensive Coordinator Dave Rader called the plays and the various coaches/players shifted the formation. More than once the "quarterback" had to check with Rader to make sure the play was correct. "We just adjourned our staff meeting to the practice field," Shula said. "It was a walk-through session except the coaches were the players."

–J.E. Lisby

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ASSISTANT COACHES

by J.E. Lisby and Drew Champlin

Joe Kines

Assistant Head Coach
Defensive Coordinator
Linebackers

During his more than 30 years in the coaching profession, Joe Kines has worked at some of the most prestigious jobs in football, including Florida State, Florida, Georgia and the Tampa Bay Buccaneers. But everywhere he went the Piedmont, Alabama, native always looked for a chance to return to Tuscaloosa. When the opportunity came last winter, Kines jumped at it. "I cannot tell you how excited I am to be back," Alabama's new defensive coordinator said. "It's like a new beginning."

This isn't Kines' first time to coach at The Capstone. During the 1985 and 1986 seasons he coordinated the Tide defense for Ray Perkins. Coincidentally, that team was led by a left-handed quarterback named Mike Shula. When Perkins left for the NFL, both Kines and Shula went with him. "I've been fortunate to be at some good places," Kines said. "It isn't like I've moved around in the bush leagues. But the place I loved the most was right here in Tuscaloosa."

When Shula was hired as Alabama's 26th head coach, his decision to retain Kines as defensive coordinator and linebackers coach was considered a good one. Their time together at Alabama and with the Buccaneers fostered a level of trust that Shula knew he could rely on, and it was no surprise when he named Kines his assistant head coach. Listening to Kines' distinctive voice at a recent football camp, Shula remarked "It seems like old times."

Kines' daughter, Susan, attended The University during his previous tenure on the Alabama staff. When dad moved on to the NFL, she stayed behind in Tuscaloosa to get her degree, marry, and start a family. With two grandsons living in town, Kines is more than happy to be back with the Tide. And working for his former colleague is an added bonus. "There's no question there is a comfort level in working with Coach Shula," Kines said. "His background in the NFL has prepared him well for this job. He's got a vision of where he wants to take the program, and his heart beats Crimson and White."

Perhaps more than any other college coach in the country, Kines is prepared to add to the legacy of Alabama defense. He said, "I grew up sitting on the back porch listening to Coach Bryant and Crimson Tide football. I've coached at some great schools, but there has always been something special about Alabama to me. Just to get to be a part of it…

"When I walk down the halls here it makes my heart beat fast. That may sound a little hokey, but there has always been a great love for the school in my heart."

FIRST-YEAR CHALLENGES?

"We've had to spend a great deal of time self-reviewing, looking at film from last year. We've done that as we've gone along through winter, spring and now summer. Whether or not we have enough time, we'll have to get the job done as quickly as we can."

WHAT IS UNIQUE ABOUT THE CRIMSON TIDE?

"Since I coached at Alabama before, wherever I was I always enjoyed watching and following Alabama on TV. The good that goes with coaching at Alabama–the pressure that goes with it–all of those things don't really matter when that kicker's foot hits the football at kickoff. As far as expectations go, nobody wants to be average. And there is definitely nothing average about Alabama."

CHALLENGES PRESENTED BY THE NCAA SANCTIONS?

"As for the loss of scholarships, it's got to hurt us some. It's already starting to show a little bit in our depth. If you look across the nation, though, everybody's in the same boat."

"At times over the past few months it looked a little rocky, but we'll re-group and be fine for this season. It's time to get positive and it's time to band together and stay together. If we do that, we'll come out of this difficult period."

The Joe Kines File

Assignment: Assistant Head Coach, Defensive Coordinator and Linebackers
Third year at Alabama
Seventh year with Coach Shula

Personal:
Born: July 13, 1944
Wife: Rubye; daughter: Susan; grandchildren: Matthew and Joshua

Education:
1967 B.A., Jacksonville State
1972 Masters, Jacksonville State

Playing Experience:
1964-66 Jacksonville State

Coaching Experience:

2003-	Alabama, Defensive Coordinator/Linebackers
2000-2002	Florida State, Linebackers
1995-1999	Georgia, Defensive Coordinator/Assistant Head Coach
1993-1994	Arkansas, Assistant Head Coach, Defensive Coordinator
1992	Arkansas, Head Coach
1991	Arkansas, Defensive Coordinator
1987-1990	Tampa Bay Buccaneers, Linebackers
1985-1986	Alabama, Defensive Coordinator, Inside Linebackers
1984	Florida, Assistant Head Coach
1981-1984	Florida, Defensive Coordinator
1979-1980	Florida, Linebackers
1977-1978	Clemson, Linebackers
1974-1976	Jacksonville State, Assistant Head Coach, Defensive Coordinator
1972-1973	Jacksonville State, Graduate Assistant
1967-1971	High School Coach

Bowl Experience:
As a coach: 2003 Sugar, 2002 Orange, 2002 Gator, 2000 Outback, 1998 Peach, 1998 Outback, 1995 Peach, 1991 Independence, 1986 Sun, 1985 Aloha, 1983 Gator, 1982 Bluebonnet, 1981 Peach, 1980 Tangerine, 1978 Gator, 1977 Gator

Dave Rader

Offensive Coordinator Quarterbacks

When Mike Shula was searching for an offensive coordinator earlier this summer, he ended up hiring a familiar face for the job. Dave Rader's first coaching job had been on the staff when Shula was playing at Alabama. Now Rader brings a wealth of offensive knowledge and experience to the Tide staff. Rader began his coaching career at Alabama as one of the first assistants hired by Ray Perkins in 1983. The two had been together with the New York Giants when Perkins was head coach and Rader a quarterback. While Rader coached at Bama, the Tide went 22-12-1 and played in the Sun and Aloha Bowls.

"It is exciting to return to Tuscaloosa," Rader said. "My wife and I have fond memories of our first stop here. I had a great time before and thought we did a lot of good things. But there has been a lot of water gone down the Black Warrior River between then and now."

Back in 1983 Rader was a fresh-faced young assistant, brought to Tuscaloosa straight from the NFL. Perkins spotted his talent and wanted Rader's youth and energy for his Alabama staff. But this time around things are different. The talent and intelligence are still there, but Rader is the old hand now. A coaching veteran of more than 20 years, Rader brings a welcome maturity to the job of offensive coordinator. "There's no question it's a different experience for me this time around," he said. "Hopefully I've gained some maturity."

An offensive coordinator himself on the NFL level, Mike Shula knew Rader would be an excellent choice for the challenge facing the Tide. It's hard enough installing new offensive schemes when the staff has all winter including spring practice to work, but Rader and his staff didn't have that luxury. Working closely with his head coach, Rader threw himself into the task of building an offense from the ground up. Their challenge was to create an attack true to their own philosophy, while also tailoring it to suit the talent on hand. And to minimize learning for the players, they sought to incorporate as much of the former Tide terminology as practical.

Both Rader and Shula are keeping close-mouthed about Bama's 2003 offense, but the key word will be "balance." Whenever possible, the goal will be to control the clock and basically be the best friend of the Tide defense. "We'd like to stay out there a long time," Rader said. "Keep our defense on the bench and score touchdowns. That's the goal."

Rader moved to Tulsa, his alma mater, in 1987 as assistant head coach in charge of quarterbacks under then-Head Coach George Henshaw. A year later Rader was appointed head coach. In his 12 seasons at Tulsa Rader earned a reputation for producing offensive results with relatively little talent. Working with what he had, under Rader the Golden Hurricane was noted especially for its innovative passing attacks. His 1991 team was ranked 21st nationally and he was selected Region 4 Coach of the Year and a finalist for National Coach of the Year. While head coach at Tulsa, he produced four All-Americas, three first-team Academic All-Americas and 11 NFL draft picks. Rader guided the Golden Hurricane to the Independence Bowl in 1989 and the Freedom Bowl in 1991.

Rader is also noted as a quarterbacks coach. During his tenure at Tulsa he tutored NFL-bound quarterbacks Gus Frerotte and T.J. Rubley.

After his experience coaching his alma mater, Rader took a step back from football, working at various business opportunities while keeping a hand in as a Tulsa-area broadcaster. But the opportunity to coach at Alabama and help Shula rebuild the program was too good to pass up. "I told myself that if I got back into coaching, it would have to be as a coordinator," Rader said. "And I wanted a chance to win it all."

A board member of the Fellowship of Christian Athletes, Big Brothers & Sisters, and Heritage Family Services, Rader has served on the American Football Coaches Association's Football Issues and Ethics committees.

The Dave Rader File

Assignment: Offensive Coordinator/Quarterbacks
Fourth year at Alabama
Fourth year with Coach Shula

Personal:
Born: August 21, 1961
Wife: Janet; daughter: Kendal; sons: Daniel and Jordan

Education:
1980 Tulsa, Mechanical Engineering

Playing Experience:

1979-1982	New York Giants
1979	San Diego Chargers
1975-1978	Tulsa, quarterback

Coaching Experience:

2003-	Alabama, Offensive Coordinator/Quarterbacks
1988-1999	Tulsa, Head Coach
1987	Tulsa, Assistant Head Coach/Quarterbacks
1986	Mississippi State, Offensive Coordinator
1983-1985	Alabama, Receivers

Bowl Experience:
As a player: 1976 Independence
As a coach: 1991 Freedom, 1989 Independence, 1985 Aloha, 1983 Sun

Sparky Woods

Running Backs

Having served as either head coach or offensive coordinator for 19 of his 26 coaching years, Sparky Woods brings a tremendous depth of experience to Alabama. Originally hired by Mike Price to coach tight ends, Mike Shula decided to keep Woods as a part of his offensive staff. The only question was in what capacity? Woods' background basically meant he could handle virtually any job available, making him an extremely valuable man. "I hope that was true," Woods said. "I told Coach Shula, 'Anything I can do to help.' I have had some experience in my career, and maybe I offered some flexibility there. I just want to help. If that means coaching this position or recruiting this area, then I'm willing to do it."

With the staff now in place, Woods will be coaching the Tide running backs. He's anxious to get started. "What I want is for us to have more points at the end of the game than South Florida," he said, "and then to do that again each Saturday throughout the season. So whatever I can do to help us achieve that goal, I'll do. That's also what I've seen out of the other staff members and from the players. I like this team, and I like the camaraderie of the staff."

Woods is one of several staff members with past experience as a head coach. He said, "When I was a head coach I always felt that experienced assistants were a wonderful thing. I'm a better coach now than I was in years past. I haven't lost any enthusiasm. Coach Shula has got a great vision for this place. My job is to assist him in whatever way I can."

A native of Tennessee, Woods played football with former Tide Defensive Coordinator Carl Torbush at Carson-Newman. His long career has taken him all over the South, including stops at North Alabama, Appalachian State, South Carolina, Memphis, Virginia and Mississippi State. He's always admired Alabama, and Woods eagerly accepted the job when offered. "Alabama has 'moved me' a lot of times," Woods said with a laugh. "I'm glad they've moved me to Tuscaloosa finally. Our football players are great. They're proud to wear the Alabama Crimson, and so am I."

FIRST-YEAR CHALLENGES?

"Change and all that involves is the biggest challenge going into the season. To get 11 people doing the same thing all the time–plus there are 11 on the other side of the ball that you've got to deal with. Communication is the key. I think more than any other game communication in football is essential."

"Obviously personalities and getting to know the players is important. Understanding and trusting each other is key."

WHAT IS UNIQUE ABOUT THE CRIMSON TIDE?

"If you like football, then you have to like Alabama. It's fun recruiting for Alabama, because other schools can't deny that football is important at Alabama. The worst thing is for people not to be interested in what you're doing."

"It's football season all the time in the state, but it's also fun. The positives far outweigh the negatives."

CHALLENGES PRESENTED BY THE NCAA SANCTIONS?

"Scholarship limitations are tough, and just the word 'probation' has a negative tone to it. Everybody has nice facilities and nice schools, so if you're forced to spend your time apologizing or explaining, that's less time you have to focus on the positives. Instead of talking about 12 national championships, the new facilities and going to bowl games, you have to put out the fires created by rival recruiters.

"Even though the common-sense fan understands the problems we're facing, football isn't always about common sense. It's about emotion and enthusiasm and release from your daily routine. The mindset is 'We want to win.' Everyone who follows Alabama wants to win, but the challenge is that we are going to be shorthanded the next couple of years."

The Sparky Woods File

Assignment: Running Backs
First year at Alabama
First year with Coach Shula

Personal:
Born: December 20, 1953
Wife: Jean Ann; daughter: Emily; son: Casey

Education:
1976 Carson Newman, Health and Physical Education

Playing Experience: 1973-1976, Carson Newman, quarterback-defensive back

Coaching Experience:

2003-	Alabama, Running Backs
1999-2002	Mississippi State, Offensive Coordinator/Quarterbacks
1997-1998	Virginia, Offensive Coordinator/Quarterbacks
1995-1996	Memphis, Offensive Coordinator/Quarterbacks
1994	New York Jets, Offensive Assistant
1989-1993	South Carolina, Head Coach
1983-1988	Appalachian State, Head Coach/Offensive Coordinator/Quarterbacks
1979-1982	Iowa State, Receivers
1978	North Alabama, Defensive Backs
1977	Kansas
1976	Tennessee

Bowl Experience:
As a coach: 2000 Independence, 1999 Peach, 1998 Peach

Recruiting Territory: South Carolina, Kentucky, East Tennessee, West Tennessee, North Mississippi, Central Mississippi, West Central Alabama

Charlie Harbison

Wide Receivers

Having coached at Alabama previously from 1998-2000, Charlie Harbison's return to The Capstone is a welcome homecoming. Harbison was the final hire made by Mike Shula in assembling his Tide staff. Harbison will work on offense, coaching the Alabama wide receivers. "I suppose it really is a homecoming for me," Harbison said. "I was blessed to be here the first time, and I'm doubly blessed to get a chance to come back."

During his first tenure in Tuscaloosa, Harbison worked with the defensive backs. The previous two seasons he handled the same duties at LSU. At both schools the units coached by Harbison were ranked in the upper half of the conference. In the past four years he has earned two SEC championship rings (1999, Alabama and 2001, LSU). "I coach football because I love it," Harbison said. "I genuinely love what I do. I'm thankful every day. I don't wake up a day that I don't thank God for the opportunity to coach at Alabama."

During his recent run in the Southeastern Conference, Harbison earned a reputation as an excellent recruiter. While a member of the Tide staff he played a key role in recruiting several current players, including starting strongside linebacker Cornelius Wortham. He hopes to again be an important part of Tide recruiting. Harbison said, "I think I do bring some experience recruiting in the SEC. Sincerity is the key. The parents and the kids understand quickly that what they see is who I am. When I recruit a kid, I tell the parents that we want their son to return to them a better person. Those aren't just words. They're our life here at Alabama."

Unlike many hard-edged assistants in football, Harbison is clearly a "players' coach" and proud of it. "I'm a 'people person.' I might not always show it, but I love the kids and I love to see them grow. Whatever I need to be for my athletes for them to be comfortable in their environment, that's what I want to be. If it's a father-figure, then I'll do it. I'm going to push them to be the best they can be. I tell them, 'If you came here to be average, then you came to the wrong place. This is not an average place.'"

FIRST-YEAR CHALLENGES?

"Besides meeting with the other offensive coaches, I think I spent most of my time the first several weeks getting to know the players and them getting to know me. I don't see starting off this first year as a problem at all, but a blessing.

"I want to work hard to be an asset to this coaching staff. It's important that everyone carry his share of the load, and I want to make sure I do that."

WHAT IS UNIQUE ABOUT THE CRIMSON TIDE?

"It's the history that makes Alabama special. I remember growing up in North Carolina, watching The University play on television and listening to Keith Jackson call the game. 'Bear' Bryant, Alabama football and Keith Jackson was like baseball and hotdogs in the summertime. I always knew about the tradition, then all of a sudden I'm here. As a little boy I'm watching them on TV, and now I'm walking around the campus. I visited the museum when I first came to campus and I saw the rich tradition.

"This is a special place; it's like no other place I've been. It's a family. The one thing about family is, if you mess with family, you've got to deal with some people. There's a bond here. And it's continuing to grow because of our head coach."

CHALLENGES PRESENTED BY THE NCAA SANCTIONS?

"I don't look at it as a negative. These players are here for a reason. Alabama is special. We'll get through this situation with hard work and by depending on each other."

The Charlie Harbison File

Assignment: Wide Receivers
Fourth year at Alabama
First year with Coach Shula

Personal:
Born: October 27, 1959
Wife: Gloria (deceased); daughters: Masai and Meiba; sons: Charlie and Steadman

Education:
1982 Gardner Webb, Business Administration

Playing Experience:

1984	New Orleans Breakers
1983	Boston Breakers
1979-1982	Gardner Webb

Coaching Experience:

2003-	Alabama, Wide Receivers
2001-2002	LSU, Defensive Backs
1998-2000	Alabama, Defensive Backs
1995-1997	Clemson, Defensive Backs
1994	UTEP, Defensive Backs
1993-1994	Charlotte Rage, Defensive Coordinator/Defensive Backs
1992-1993	Gardner Webb, Wide Receivers
1991	Raleigh-Durham Skyhawks, Defensive Backs
1990	Charlotte Barons, Linebackers
1984-1985	Gardner Webb, Defensive Backs
1982-1983	East Lincoln (N.C.) High School

Bowl Experience:
As a coach: 2003 Cotton, 2002 Sugar, 2000 Orange, 1998 Music City, 1996 Peach, 1996 Gator

Recruiting Territory: North Carolina, East Central Georgia, Northwest Central Alabama, Memphis

Bobby Connelly

Offensive Linemen

One of two former Washington State coaches retained by Mike Shula on the Alabama staff, Bobby Connelly will handle offensive linemen for the Tide. A former offensive "grunt" himself in college, Connelly was named all-conference his final two years. He holds a Masters degree and was twice named an Academic All-America.

"I came to Alabama from Washington State, but I grew up in Texas," Connelly said. "They take their football seriously back home, so I knew all about Alabama."

Connelly brings intelligence and youth to his job with the Tide. "I think we have the personnel to take Alabama football back to the level fans expect," Connelly said. "The players and coaches have got to come together. That's our goal as a staff, to bring some continuity. Put the recent past behind us and move forward."

At Washington State, Connelly's trench troops were noted for pass protection. The past two seasons those Cougar offensive lines allowed just 51 sacks, an average of one every 16.8 passing attempts. No offense can be successful without a solid offensive line leading the way, and the 2002 Washington State attack unit averaged 436.8 yards per game, 11th best in the nation.

Connelly began his coaching career eight years ago, when he took a job at his alma mater. Other than the graduate assistants, that makes him the youngest member of the Alabama staff. But he's eager to coach in Tuscaloosa. "The fans and the people associated with Alabama football are all tradition-oriented people," he said. "And their expectations are to win. But I don't think there is any fan out there who is going to have higher expectations than we as football coaches."

Connelly was anxious to join the Tide staff, hoping to prove himself against the top competition in college football. He said, "The biggest challenge moving to a new conference is familiarizing yourself with your opponents. Not having ever coached in the SEC, means you have to scout to see what we might face. As the offensive line coach I have to use film to look at other defensive fronts and the philosophies of other defensive coordinators in the league."

FIRST-YEAR CHALLENGES?

"Obviously just being new to the school and players is a challenge. But that's behind me now, because I had this past spring to go through. I used that time to form relationships with the players and establish my depth chart. I feel good about the upcoming season, knowing the strengths and weaknesses of my personnel."

WHAT IS UNIQUE ABOUT THE CRIMSON TIDE?

"It all goes back to the Coach Bryant days. The extremely high expectation level is what I expected, but I think it's an exciting thing. The fans are very involved. Alabama means a lot to them. Coming to Bryant-Denny Stadium and watching the Tide play on Saturdays is an exciting time for Tide fans, just as it is for us as coaches and the players.

"I view the expectations as a positive. It keeps the fans coming. Obviously, Alabama is a tradition-rich program with a lot of past success under its belt. We hope to continue those traditions, take the program back to where it once was and, hopefully, add a few chapters of our own."

CHALLENGES PRESENTED BY THE NCAA SANCTIONS?

"The biggest challenge is losing the scholarships. Reducing the number of scholarshipped players on the football field must be dealt with. But the kids we're recruiting to Alabama now don't face any of those sanctions. They have four years of bowl games and championships to look forward to, so that part of it is behind us.

"What we have to get through is the reduction of the 21 scholarships that were taken from us. We need to get back to the 85 total number. In the meantime we've got to do a good job with the players we've got. Retention is key. We need to put a product on the field that will sell itself and attract the premier high school athletes."

The Bobby Connelly File

Assignment: Offensive Line
First year at Alabama
First year with Coach Shula

Personal:
Born: February 7, 1971
Wife: Racquel; daughters: Taylor and Paige

Education:
1994 Texas A&M-Commerce, Kinesiology and Sports Studies
1995 Masters, Texas A&M-Commerce, Health, Physical Education and Recreation

Playing Experience:

1991-1994	Texas A&M-Commerce

Coaching Experience:

2003-	Alabama, Offensive Line
2001-2002	Washington State, Offensive Line
2000	San Jose State, Offensive Line
1999	California State-Northridge, Offensive Line/Tight Ends
1998	Texas A&M, Graduate Assistant
1996-1997	Cisco Junior College, Offensive Line/Tight Ends
1995	Texas A&M-Commerce, Offensive Line/Tight Ends

Bowl Experience:
As a coach: 2003 Rose, 2001 Sun, 1999 Sugar

Recruiting Territory: Florida Panhandle, South Georgia, Lower Southeast Alabama, Dallas/Fort Worth (Texas)

Buddy Wyatt

Defensive Tackles

Last season Alabama had one of the very best defensive lines in the nation, but three of those starters are now playing in the NFL. Defensive Tackles Coach Buddy Wyatt acknowledges the challenge. "The number one thing we have to accomplish is to develop some depth," he said. "We've got some guys who played last year and have experience. But we've also got some guys who didn't play at all, and they're going to have to help. We'll have to gain some experience on the run."

Wyatt starred on the defensive line at Texas Christian and spent his first two post-college seasons in professional football as a reserve player. His coaching career began in 1991. Since then Wyatt has coached the defensive line at Minnesota, Oklahoma State, Northwestern, Colorado and Texas A&M. In his brief career Wyatt has already sent several players to the NFL, including Casey Dailey, Keith Lozowski, Kejuan DuBose, Ty Warren, Rocky Bernard, Ronald Edwards and Ronald Flemings.

Wyatt knows there are no shortcuts to success. "We've got to get in the best shape that we possibly can," Wyatt said. "That will help us play better in the fourth quarter. Depth and conditioning are our two main challenges heading into the fall."

Having played the position himself, Wyatt demands much from his tackles. He said, "What we'd like to have are kids who are athletic. Our job is not to keep the offensive line occupied while the linebackers make the tackles. We want aggressive players. We want our guys to make tackles for losses and sacks. We want guys who are playmakers instead of guys who just occupy space. I think we have the talent to do just that."

Wyatt has worked for some of the premier programs in college football, but none of his previous experience prepared him completely for the Alabama faithful. He said, "When I first arrived in Tuscaloosa some of the fans already knew who I was. You walk into a brand new place and you hear 'How's it going, Coach?' And I'm thinking 'Man! I must have "Coach" stamped on my forehead or something.' Alabama fans want to know everything about their football program. They want to know the coaches and their backgrounds and their history."

FIRST-YEAR CHALLENGES?

"We know where we are. I'm not discouraged one bit. I understand we lost some good players last year, but I'm happy with my younger guys, their athletic ability, and their work ethic. It's just a matter of time before they're going to be better football players."

WHAT IS UNIQUE ABOUT THE CRIMSON TIDE?

"The way I see the fans is they just love their football program and they're very intense about college football in general. From the season to recruiting to spring football. For me, the difference in coaching at Alabama won't be the number of people in the stands, it'll be the intensity the fans bring to watch the game and support the program. A lot of fans may come out on Saturdays in the fall, but at Alabama you have fans at spring practice. Even at the Texas A&Ms and Colorados, you just don't see that type of support year round."

CHALLENGES PRESENTED BY THE NCAA SANCTIONS?

"Obviously in the recruiting process other recruiters are going to use probation against you. Recruiting is a tough business. It gets ugly, and the closer it gets to Signing Day, the tougher it gets. People start saying everything and anything to try to beat you on some kids. Obviously that's a knock that they've been using against The University of Alabama the past few years. That made our job this past winter a little more difficult.

"But this year we're out from underneath the sanctions. Rival recruiters are not going to be able to use that against us. I've gotten to know everyone on the staff, and I really feel good about our ability to recruit."

The Buddy Wyatt File

Assignment: Defensive Tackles
First year at Alabama
First year with Coach Shula

Personal:
Born: November 8, 1966
Wife: Andrea; daughter: Ariel; son: Fredrick

Education:
1989 Texas Tech, Education

Playing Experience:

1989-1990	NFL reserve squads (Pittsburgh and Kansas City)
1987-1990	Texas Tech, defensive line

Coaching Experience:

2003-	Alabama, Defensive Tackles
2000-2002	Texas A&M, Defensive Line
1999	Colorado, Defensive Line
1997-1998	Northwestern, Defensive Line/Special Teams
1996	Oklahoma State, Defensive Line
1992-1995	Minnesota, Defensive Line/Special Teams
1991	TCU, Graduate Assistant

Bowl Experience:
As a coach: 2000 Independence, 2001 Galleryfurniture.com, 1999 Insight.com

Recruiting Territory: New Orleans, Northeast Florida, South Mississippi, Lower Southwest Alabama, Houston (TX)

Paul Randolph

Defensive Ends

Paul Randolph brings experience both as a professional player and college assistant to his job as defensive ends coach. A native of Gainesville, Georgia, Randolph was a two-time all-conference linebacker at Tennessee-Martin. After college he played 10 seasons in the Canadian Football League, eight of those with the Winnipeg Blue Bombers. Randolph helped Winnipeg win Grey Cup titles in 1988 and 1990. Randolph finished his career with the Montreal Alouettes as a player/coach.

After a brief stint at his alma mater, Randolph coached the defensive line at four schools in four years, before being hired away from the West Virginia staff by Alabama. Before this season he had always been responsible for all four defensive line positions, but he likes sharing duties with Buddy Wyatt. "I think it's gone great," Randolph said. "I really like the situation. As a defensive line coach if the techniques for the four positions aren't all that different, then you can coach all the positions. But if you're in a scheme where the outside technique is different from the inside, then you need two coaches. This way I'm able to specialize and work hard to get it right."

Like the rest of Bama's defensive coaches, Randolph was able to go through spring practice, getting to know his players while working on their football skills. Both Antwan Odom and Nautyn McKay-Loescher, his projected starters on the right and left sides, missed significant time. But Randolph believes that actually helped the unit as a whole. He said, "Going through spring with the different injuries and illnesses helped us. In a way I was happy when that happened. Of course you want your top guys out there, but that proved to all the players that we're definitely going to need our young guys to be ready to contribute. Now we have more guys available and playing well."

Though the current system calls for Randolph to work individually with the defensive ends, he and Wyatt know that success can only come when all four positions are playing well. "We separate them as defensive ends and defensive tackles, but they're all D-Linemen," Randolph said. "If the two guys inside are playing well and our ends are playing to their level, then blockers will have to guess who to double."

FIRST-YEAR CHALLENGES?

"Developing trust is the biggest issue at hand during the first year. As a new coach you've got to come in and help your players see that you know what you're talking about, and that what you have to offer will help them attain their goals. They have to trust me enough to think 'Okay, this guy knows what he's doing.'

"It doesn't happen over night. To develop genuine trust takes work. You've got to earn it and then maintain it."

WHAT IS UNIQUE ABOUT THE CRIMSON TIDE?

"The fans are second to none. They eat, sleep and breathe Alabama football. I've been some places where it wasn't that way, so I welcome it. It's better to have them watching and caring about the program than not. Fans take an active interest in knowing as much as they can about Alabama football, which keeps you on your toes as a coach. But the fans really just care about the same thing that we as coaches care about, and that's winning."

CHALLENGES PRESENTED BY THE NCAA SANCTIONS?

"Every kid wants the opportunity to play for championships and have a chance to go to a bowl, which we are not able to do this year. But we're coming off of that part of the sanctions, so I think recruiting will pick up. Recruits now will have an opportunity to go to a bowl game and to play for the national title.

"The other sanctions involving limited numbers on scholarships puts the emphasis on the coaches. We've got to make sure that the players we evaluate do fit at Alabama. With the numbers down, you can't afford to miss."

The Paul Randolph File

Assignment: Defensive Ends
First year at Alabama
First year with Coach Shula

Personal:
Born: June 22, 1966
Wife: Mia; daughter: Mya; son: Patrick

Education:
1990 Tennessee-Martin, Engineering Technology

Playing Experience:

1996-1997	Montreal Alouettes, Player/Coach
1988-1995	Winnipeg Blue Bombers, Player/Coach
1984-1987	Tennessee-Martin

Coaching Experience:

2003-	Alabama, Defensive Ends
2002	West Virginia, Defensive Line/Special Teams
2001	Toledo, Defensive Line/Special Teams
2000	Illinois State, Defensive Line/Special Teams
1999	Valdosta State, Defensive Line/Special Teams
1998	Tennessee-Martin, Linebackers/Special Teams

Bowl Experience:
As a coach: 2002 Continental Tire, 2001 Motor City

Recruiting Territory: Southeast Florida, Miami, West Central Georgia, East Central Alabama

Chris Ball

Defensive Backs

When Chris Ball joined the Alabama staff last January, it marked his first coaching job in the Deep South. But it didn't take long for him to appreciate the rich history that is Crimson Tide football. "I like the attention; I like the tradition; I like the importance," he said. "At Alabama football is a big deal, and that's one of the reasons I wanted to come here. Coaching at Alabama is different from anywhere else I've been. The reason you come to Alabama is to have an opportunity to win a national championship. That's what I came here to do."

For the great majority of his 16-year coaching career Ball has worked with defensive backs, and that is his responsibility at Alabama. A 1985 All-America selection and first-team all conference pick at Missouri Western State College, Ball's coaching resume includes stops at his alma mater, Northeast Missouri State, Akron, Western Oregon State, Idaho State and Washington State. He inherits a unit that returns two starters and was ranked fourth in the SEC in pass efficiency defense last year, so the Bama secondary cupboard is not bare. "I think we've got three guys, possibly four with potential all-conference ability," Ball said. "We still need to be sounder in our technique, but we pretty much got everything accomplished during spring that we wanted to."

After working with the Alabama defensive backs during spring drills, Ball believes the unit can be very good. He said, "I think we have great talent–Charlie Peprah, Charles Jones, Roman Harper and Anthony Madison. We've got a heckuva secondary. But the kids need to work hard. If we just go through the motions and work average, then we'll be an average secondary. I'm really looking forward to two-a-days."

On the job since January, Ball is confident he knows his players' athletic potential. But he points out that working with athletes on the field is only half of a college coach's job. He said, "Spring helped, but I want to do more getting to know them better. I want to spend time just talking with them–not just about football, but about life in general and what's going on in their lives. For me there is more to coaching than just Xs and Os. You get more out of the kids if you show them that you care about them on and off the field."

FIRST-YEAR CHALLENGES?

"Just getting to know the players is a priority. It's always important to me that I develop a close relationship with the players. It's important that I know their personalities and they know me and my expectations. I want them to know that my door is always open. They need to be able to trust me and come in and talk about almost anything. That's very important for me to be effective. My philosophy is to get to know them as well as I can."

WHAT IS UNIQUE ABOUT THE CRIMSON TIDE?

"The people here are very passionate about their football. To me that makes the job more fun–living in a state where football is such a big deal. One of the reasons this job is so attractive to coaches is the importance of football in the state. That's not a negative. On the contrary, it's a real plus. This is my profession. Why wouldn't you want to work in a place where football is really, really important?"

CHALLENGES PRESENTED BY THE NCAA SANCTIONS?

"Recruiting was the biggest challenge. You go out talking to recruits and all the rival coaches are know-it-alls. The other recruiters are telling recruits nonsense about your situation, just throwing dirt in your face. To get past that and explain to the kid the truth is crucial. But other than that, we're going to be okay. After this year we're pretty much back to normal. Sure, we're not as deep as we'd like to be, but who is? Nowadays not very many programs have depth."

The Chris Ball File

Assignment: Defensive Backs
First year at Alabama
First year with Coach Shula

Personal:
Born: May 7, 1963
Wife: Tandy; son: Brennan

Education:
1986 Missouri Western State College

Playing Experience:

1982-1985	Missouri Western State College

Coaching Experience:

2003-	Alabama, Defensive Backs
2000-2002	Washington State, Secondary
1999	Idaho State, Defensive Coordinator/Linebackers
1997-1998	Missouri Western State, Defensive Coordinator
1995-1996	Western Oregon State, Assistant Head Coach/ Defensive Backs
1991-1994	Coffeyville Community College, Secondary
1989-1990	Washington State, Cornerbacks
1987-1988	Akron, Defensive Backs/Special Teams
1986-1987	Northeast Missouri State, Secondary
1986	Missouri Western State

Bowl Experience:
As a coach: 2003 Rose, 2001 Sun

Recruiting Territory: Central Florida, Middle Tennessee, North Alabama

Dave Ungerer

Special Teams Coordinator Tight Ends

Dave Ungerer, a coaching veteran of 20 college football seasons, begins his first campaign as Alabama's special teams and tight ends coach. Head Coach Mike Shula hired Ungerer (pronounced UN-gur") away from California. Born at Camp Lejeune, North Carolina, Ungerer starred at Southern Connecticut State as a running back, also returning punts and kickoffs. Before making the move to the West Coast, he had spent most of his time working on the Eastern Seaboard. "I spent a great deal of my career on the East Coast, and then I recently moved to California," Ungerer said. "I had never really considered coaching at Alabama, but then Coach Shula called."

It's common for coaching staffs to visit each other in the summer, hoping to pick up pointers from their colleagues. Earlier in his career Ungerer had occasion to travel to Miami to talk to and observe the Dolphins coaching staff. His primary focus then as now was on special teams, but Ungerer also caught the attention of a particular Dolphins offensive assistant. And when Mike Shula was searching for a special teams coordinator at Alabama, he contacted Ungerer. "Coach Shula and I had met when I visited the Dolphins to check out what they were doing on special teams," Ungerer said. "We really didn't talk one-on-one all that much, but he knew who I was. When he needed someone to coach special teams, thankfully he remembered my name and called."

As with offense and defense, Shula wanted an experienced coach to coordinate special teams, and Ungerer was the man. Other Tide assistants will help with specific aspects of the kicking game; for example, Paul Randolph, Buddy Wyatt and Chris Ball have previous experience with special teams. But Ungerer will be the person responsible for both schemes and personnel. He said, "I'll be in overall charge, but I'll be talking to the other members of the staff, looking for the guys who have experience coaching special teams. I'll ask several of the staff members to help out at practice."

Last season the Golden Bears finished first in kickoff returns in the Pac-10, fifth nationally. California also led their conference in punt returns. His special teams at Cal accounted for six plays of 50 yards or more on the season. Kickoff return man LaShaun Ward set the school record for return yards in a season with 806 yards.

California's tight end, Tom Swoboda, finished the season with 42 receptions for 451 yards and seven touchdowns. Swoboda caught six or more passes in five games last year.

Before joining the Cal staff Ungerer coached running backs and special teams the previous two seasons at Lehigh. During that period, the Engineers went 23-2, advancing to the NCAA Division I-AA semifinals in 2001 and the quarterfinals in 2000. Prior to the Lehigh stint, Ungerer coached running backs and special teams for five years at Maryland and four seasons at Holy Cross, where he also served as strength and conditioning coach. Ungerer began his coaching career at Rutgers as a graduate assistant. He left Rutgers to coach at both Northeastern and Davidson.

FIRST-YEAR CHALLENGES?

"The biggest thing for me will be getting to know the players and the talent we've got available. Not going through spring practice makes that hard, so I'll be really working hard to scout the players on our roster during the fall."

WHAT IS UNIQUE ABOUT THE CRIMSON TIDE?

"When you get a chance to coach at one of the premier programs in college football, you can't pass that up.

"The fans want to win, just like the coaches. You want to be in a place where the expectations are great."

CHALLENGES PRESENTED BY THE NCAA SANCTIONS?

"I've worked with programs facing similar challenges before, so that wasn't a worry for me. The biggest problem is with recruiting, but Alabama will be finished with the sanctions this year, so that shouldn't be a problem."

The Dave Ungerer File

Assignment: Special Teams Coordinator/Tight Ends
First year at Alabama
First year with Coach Shula

Personal:
Born: August 21, 1961
Wife: Sylvia; sons: Dominic, David and Dante

Education:
1980 Southern Connecticut State

Playing Experience:

1976-1979	Southern Connecticut State, running back

Coaching Experience:

2003-	Alabama, Special Teams/Tight Ends
2002	California, Special Teams/Tight Ends
2000-2001	Lehigh, Running Backs/Tight Ends
1992-1998	Maryland, Running Backs/Special Teams
1988-1991	Holy Cross, Running Backs/Special Teams/Strength & Conditioning
1986-1987	Davidson, Defensive Line/Special Teams
1985	Northeastern, Defensive Line/Special Teams
1983-1984	Rutgers, Graduate Assistant

Bowl/Playoff Experience:
As a coach: 2001 NCAA Division I-AA (semi-finals), 2000 NCAA Division I-AA (quarter-finals)

Recruiting Territory: West Coast of Florida, North Georgia, Northeast Central Alabama

Randy Ross

Director of Football Operations

Now in his 14th year at The Capstone, Randy Ross will handle the duties of director of Football Operations. Occupying the office just across the hall from Head Coach Mike Shula, Ross believes a principal part of his job is to free up the head coach and his staff to concentrate on football. "The head coach has got to be in complete charge, but at the same time somebody has got to handle the smaller details," Ross said. "Handle them and get them done without having to take Coach Shula's time. Deal with the smaller things and let him handle the important issues, coach this football team, and run it the way he wants it run."

The Football Operations job includes a broad range of duties, but Ross primarily will coordinate on-campus recruiting, handle office management and administration at the Football Complex, take care of game-day details, plan team travel, and act as a go-between with other university departments and the football team. Ross said, "A lot of what I'm doing now is a combination of what I've done recently; the additional responsibilities are not that great. Now I'm directly in charge of things like the team rosters, the dorms, the meals–the things that you do day-to-day for the players."

Ross handled similar duties during the 1997 season, and his most recent job as director of High School Relations meant he kept a hand in on almost all aspects of the football operation. "This hasn't been too much of a problem," he said, "because I've been involved in all those things before. Not all at one time, but I've done them all before. I've actually enjoyed the extra work. It's been fun."

After playing baseball for St. Bernard College in Cullman, Ross began an 11-year career in high school coaching. As a prep coach he sent 15 players to college football, among them former Tide quarterback David Smith. Ross was named area Coach of the Year twice. In 1987 he moved to the college ranks, coaching quarterbacks for Watson Brown at Vanderbilt. Former Tide Head Coach Gene Stallings brought Ross to Tuscaloosa in 1990. Among other duties, Ross served as the Tide's recruiting coordinator from 1990-1998. He spent one year in the Alabama development office before taking over the High School Relations job in 2000.

When the former Alabama staff abruptly bolted for Texas A&M last December, Randy Ross was the man who almost single-handedly held the Tide's recruiting together until the new staff could come on board. During that month when he wasn't on the phone calming the nerves of anxious prospects, Ross was talking long-distance to incoming staff members, directing their recruiting efforts via telephone.

Besides Ross, Coach Shula has assembled a talented and veteran staff, including three men that have been head coaches before. Ross said, "The summer has been kind of a meshing period. We've got such a good staff that when we go into a meeting we have plenty of good ideas. The challenge is making everything fit together. You get everybody's input, then you come out with a single idea."

Ross brings a different style of leadership to the role. His predecessor, Charley North (who accompanied Franchione to Texas A&M), was considered an intimidator in the Football Complex. "I try to treat people the way I want to be treated," Ross said. "If you explain to people why you can or can't do something, people are going to respond to that. For me to jump on somebody without them knowing why is not fair to the employee. There may come a time when you have to roll your sleeves up and wade in, but generally people understand and respond positively when you take the time to explain to them."

The Randy Ross File

Assignment: Director of Football Operations
Fourteenth year at Alabama
First year with Coach Shula

Personal:
Born: October 6, 1953
Wife: Ann

Education:
1975 St. Bernard College

Coaching Experience:

2003-	Alabama, Director of Football Operations
2000-2002	Alabama, Athletics High School Relations
1999	Alabama, Athletics Development
1990-1998	Alabama, Recruiting Coordinator
1987-1989	Vanderbilt, Quarterbacks
1985-1986	Scottsboro High School
1976-1984	Southside High School
1975	Gaston High School

Bowl Experience:
As a coach: 2001 Independence, 2000 Orange, 1998 Music City, 1997 Outback, 1995 Citrus, 1993 Gator, 1993 Sugar, 1991 Blockbuster, 1991 Fiesta

Ben Pollard

Head Coach Strength and Conditioning

One thing that the Alabama football players have not enjoyed over the past few months is a state of continuity on the coaching staff. A notable exception to the turmoil is the strength and conditioning program, which has remained stable and in capable hands.

Ben Pollard is in his third year at The University serving as the head strength and conditioning coach. He came to Alabama from TCU with Dennis Franchione, but when the rest of the Franchione staff bolted for Texas A&M, Pollard chose to stay. He was retained in the short tenure of Mike Price.

When Mike Shula was announced as the Tide's 26th head coach, he knew the strength and conditioning program was in good hands, because Ben Pollard was still on board. "We're just doing our jobs," Pollard said. "Our kids, no matter what else is going on, have to prepare themselves physically to play 13 games this season. No matter what distractions are going on, there are still going to be 13 games this fall. We've got to stay focused on what we're doing. The turmoil hasn't changed how we operate, and it hasn't changed the kids. They are still here and still working out."

While the offensive players face learning a brand-new system before the first game against South Florida, they already knew what they would be doing in the summer under Pollard, the Tide's "summer coach."

"We're going to do this the way we feel best for us," Pollard said. "This transition has not changed anything that we are going to do. We are going to accomplish those things that we are determined to do. Under Coach Shula we've been able to make some adjustments athletically."

One of the most respected strength coaches in the nation, this past May Pollard was honored by his peers in the Collegiate Strength and Conditioning Association as a "Master Strength and Conditioning Coach."

Pollard is four years older than his new boss, but he knows that Shula, a former Tide quarterback, is the man in charge. He's also noticed that Shula hasn't been able to spend as much time in the weight room getting to know the players as he would like to, due in large part to the fact that he's focused on designing as much of his offensive scheme as he can before fall. However, Pollard plans to discuss with Shula the direction of the strength and conditioning program.

"There's so many other things that he's got to take care of before he can sit down and talk about the specifics of the strength and conditioning program," Pollard said. "We have a positive reputation and rapport with the pro scouts that come in here. We know what they do in Miami. They do the same types of things that we are involved with here. Ultimately when he sits down and says this is what I want to see, we're going to make the adjustments."

Pollard said that there had been some changes in the program from the previous summer. Among the adjustments would be less squat-max work, less speed training, but more conditioning geared towards stamina and stability on the football field. "These are changes we know are better," Pollard said. "We're still going to work on maximum strength levels. We're not going to sacrifice the football training things with the weight lifting training things."

Pollard also noted that the new guidelines for pre-season fall practice should benefit the players. Under new NCAA rules, the first five days of practice can only be single-practice days, and there cannot be back-to-back days in which two practice sessions (commonly known as two-a-days) take place.

Pollard said, "It will offer a little more opportunity for strength conditioning during two-a-days. I think everybody will be better going into game one. We'll be able to enjoy it more and be more position- and player-specific than we ever have been. We'll be able to help players more in their weak areas than we have in the past."

The Ben Pollard File

Assignment: Head Strength and Conditioning Coach
Third year at Alabama
First year with Coach Shula

Personal:
Born: June 17, 1961
Wife: Leslie; Sons: Harrison and Everett; Daughter: Melissa

Education:
1984 Texas Tech, Family Relations
1989 Masters, Texas Tech, Education

Coaching Experience:

2001-	Alabama, Head Strength and Conditioning Coach
1998-2000	Texas Christian, Head Football Strength Coach
1989-1997	Sam Houston State, Head Strength Coach
1988-1989	Texas Tech, Graduate Assistant Strength Coach

Bowl Experience:
As a coach: 2001 Independence, 2000 Mobile Alabama, 1999 Mobile Alabama, 1998 Sun, 1991 NCAA Division 1-AA National Playoffs

Rodney Brown

Head Trainer

The football players and coaches get all the glory following victory on a Saturday afternoon, but there are many people who work behind the scenes to make sure that they are able to perform at a high level. One of the most important is the man in charge of their health.

Rodney Brown is entering his fifth season as head trainer for the Alabama football team. Brown works long hours throughout the year to ensure that athletes are in top-notch physical condition before they take the field. "My job is to coordinate the overall health care for all our players, and basically its in three areas," Brown said. "The areas are prevention of an injury, recognition/evaluation of injuries, and, finally, rehabilitation of injuries and getting them back on the field."

Brown deals with injuries as mild as a sprained wrist, but sometimes as severe as a bone fracture or ruptured tendon. While it seems every year that a football player will suffer a torn ligament (last year the notables were punter Lane Bearden and running back Ahmaad Galloway), Brown said that the most common injuries are contusions (bruises), muscle strains, joint sprains, and ankle pain. "Those are the most common," Brown said. "Sometimes we'll have a fracture or a dislocated joint or something more serious."

Brown is not the only one who helps Tide athletes deal with injury, as a staff of student trainers assists him throughout the year. He said that there are usually 10-12 students who assist in the fall, and normally six in the spring. The trainers assist Brown in everything ranging from taping players' ankles to helping the players rehabilitate after surgery.

"Our student athletic trainers are assigned to us per semester from the athletic training program," Brown said. "The students rotate sport-to-sport for their clinical experiences. All of our certified trainers are qualified clinical instructors. They get the benefit of learning here, and we get the benefit of having them help us out."

Although there have been four head coaches in the years that Brown has held his current job, that doesn't change the relationship between Brown, and coaches. "It's a relationship of trust," Brown said. "The coaches have to trust our judgment as far as how serious an injury is and how long the athlete will be out. They have to trust us to do everything in our power to get them back as quickly and as safely as possibly. The athlete, coach, parent, and team physician all have to be on the same page as the trainer."

Brown supervises the student trainers, but that's just part of an arduous day spent during the football season. He said that during the fall, his day begins at about 6:30 in the morning and stretches until about 8:00 at night. In the spring, it's not as arduous, but he's still on campus from 7:30 a.m. till about 6:30 p.m. "There's some long hours involved, especially during the season," Brown said. "And it's seven days a week during the season."

It's not something to do if you're not really dedicated to it, Brown said. Football athletic trainer is not an average 9-to-5 job. Plus, a trainer has to deal with injuries to players, which is something that can be unpleasant to an average person.

"You've got to enjoy it to do this because there are long hours and hard work involved," Brown said. "You also have to be a caring person. You have to want to help them, because the players can sense whether you care or not. If you don't enjoy doing this stuff, don't get into it. It's one of those things where the demands are so great that you have to enjoy the job. You have to be a people person and understand how an injury can affect the player physically and psychologically."

Understanding the impact of an injury on a person is perhaps one of the more important qualities of a trainer. When they can realize that, Brown says, the job becomes much more satisfying. "We've got a really great group of kids that I enjoy working with," Brown said. "Its very satisfying to take a kid who has a really serious injury and get him back on the field playing again."

The Rodney Brown File

Assignment: Head Trainer
Seventeenth year at Alabama
First year with Coach Shula

Personal:
Born: September 21, 1953

Education:
1976 B.S., Alabama, Health and Physical Education
1982 Masters, Alabama, Health Education

Training/Coaching Experience:

1999-	Head Athletics Trainer for Football, Alabama
1987-1999	Clinical Instructor for Alabama, Athletics Training Education Program
1987-1999	Manager, DCH Sports Medicine department
1979-1987	Assistant Coach/Trainer, Tuscaloosa County High School
1978-1979	Assistant Coach, Boteler (Tuscaloosa) Junior High

Bowl Experience:
As a trainer: 2001 Independence, 2000 Orange, 1998 Music City, 1997 Outback

Tank Conerly

Equipment Director

For eight months out of the year, Tank Conerly works around 12 hours a day or more for seven days out of the week as the head equipment manager for the Alabama football team.

The average person might not be able to handle the workload, but Conerly enjoys it. Why? He enjoys working with the athletes and his student managers. Because, mentally, it makes him feel young again.

"I like knowing what music they listen to, what kind of clothes they wear, and what the lingo is," said Conerly, who is entering his 17th season at his position. "It keeps your finger on the pulse of the young society, and I really enjoy that."

Conerly's main duties include supervising a staff of 12 or 13 student managers to prepare for practice or games and ordering equipment for the athletes. During the fall, he arrives to work at about 7:30 a.m., and usually doesn't leave until 12 hours later. It doesn't leave much time for him or any of the managers.

"You give up a lot of personal time to do this," Conerly said. "You learn how to budget your time doing this. There are a lot of things you can't do that normal people do. You have to be dedicated to the job and like what you're doing."

Most people watch the football games and see the athletes perform at a high level, but most people don't know that it's Conerly and the managers who get to work before the athletes arrive and don't leave until long after practice or the game is over. What many people also don't know is that Conerly handles all the orders of equipment, which is not the easiest thing in the world to figure out. Conerly sends in orders for everything that players wear in practices and games, such as pads, chin straps, helmets, and other items that are used, such as blocking dummies, footballs, and kicking tees. The big question for Conerly: How many pieces of equipment does he have to place orders for?

"There's not much any way you can put it to an exact number, but you've got to order extra stuff anyway," Conerly said. "We inventory items to make sure we don't overorder. Some items we don't have to order every year. We're dealing with NIKE contracts now. They change the style on us sometimes so we have to start over from scratch."

Conerly said that all the cloth orders (shirts, shorts, jerseys, pants) are provided by NIKE, as the Tide athletic program is under contract with NIKE to use its clothing. Everything except the practice jerseys, which are made by Russell, comes from NIKE. Usually, whatever the equipment manager orders is something that will go to Tide players, but there are some rules that apply to what can be given to athletes.

"We don't really give the players anything that can't be deemed workout gear," Conerly said. "If there's a bowl game we give them $300 of merchandise."

But if you notice Tide football players on the road in their crimson warm-up suits, know one thing: it's not really theirs.

"It's not something to look at as a gift; it's something they use as a travel suit," Conerly said. "It's not theirs to keep, but it's assigned to them to wear. We keep a count and take them back up at the end of the season."

Last of all, Conerly and his managers have to get a feel for how coaches want things to run during practice and games. But, in Conerly's 17 years, he has seen six different head coaches. While the changes may frustrate some people, he and his managers are used to it by now.

"You have to feel out what they want and need for practice and games," Conerly said. "But we're fairly well prepared for that because we're used to it."

The Tank Conerly File

Assignment: Athletic Equipment Director
Seventeenth year at Alabama
First year with Coach Shula

Personal:
Born: May 24, 1956
Daughter: Anna

Education:
1980 B.S., Ole Miss, Physical Education

Managing Experience:

1987-	Alabama, Head Equipment Manager
1983-1987	Duke, Equipment Manager
1980-1983	Ole Miss, Assistant Equipment Manager
1975-1979	Ole Miss, Student Manager

Bowl/Playoff Experience:
As a manager: 2001 Independence, 2000 Orange, 1998 Music City, 1997 Outback, 1995 Citrus, 1993 Gator, 1993 Sugar, 1991 Blockbuster, 1991 Fiesta, 1990 Sugar, 1988 Sun, 1988 Hall of Fame, 1985 Final Four (basketball)

Tim Bowens

Coordinator, High School Relations

At the young age of 25, Tim Bowens has already built an impressive football resume. After spending time as a volunteer coach at Alabama (one year), as a coach at Coffee High School (two years), and as head coach at Tanner High School (one year), Bowens is now in the administrative side of football as the Crimson Tide's director of High School Relations. He handles the relations between Alabama players and coaches and the high school coaches, as well as professional scouts.

"I've got one foot in the coaching aspect and one in the administration aspect," Bowens said. "I'm not coaching, but I'm right there trying to help this program be successful."

Bowens led Tanner High School to a 7-4 record last season and a spot in the state playoffs. While he made all the on-the-field decisions last year, this time he's spending most of his time making decisions from the office.

"I'm used to being out there in the heat of the battle," Bowens said. "A lot of people ask me if I miss it. So far I don't miss it as much as I thought I would. You're a liaison to a whole lot of things. There's a lot of planning and organizational work involved."

In the summer, Bowens manages the camps. In the fall, he deals a lot with professional scouts, since the high school coaches are normally coaching their own teams. In the spring, Bowens sets up clinics for the high school coaches and pro days for the scouts. It's a tall order, but it gives high school and professional scouts and coaches a chance to interact with Alabama coaches, with Bowens serving as the liaison.

"During spring practice a lot of high school coaches will come and visit and want to sit down with our coaches and meet with them," Bowens said. "I find a slot for them to meet with our coaches and watch tapes. I develop relationships with them and get their coaches connected with ours."

Bowens doesn't stop there. He assists players in finding housing and also finding employment in the off-season and after graduation.

Only four years ago, Bowens was involved with Alabama football at an entirely different level–as a Crimson Tide football player. He graduated from Alabama in 1999 after having caught 24 passes in his career as a wide receiver.

Bowen has two half brothers who will be playing for the Crimson Tide this year. Sophomore Freddie Roach is a first team middle linebacker, while incoming freshman William Roach is expected to be a wide receiver.

Former Coach Mike Price hired Bowens when he indicated that he wanted to hire a high school coach from the state of Alabama to serve a role on his staff. But it was actually before Price came on staff that Bowens let Alabama's Randy Ross know that he was interested in coming back to Tuscaloosa.

"I called Coach Ross before Coach Price was hired," Bowens said. "I let him know if anything ever happened in the athletic department to let me know. Luckily, it happened. It was before Coach Price made that statement. He told me to put in and apply."

Bowens doesn't deal with recruiting, but it's frequently him who will get a call from a high school coach concerning a prospect.

Bowens said, "Usually coaches call me and say, 'I've got a kid who can play.' I take his name down and run it through the recruiting coordinator. That happens about every other day. I talk with coaches and get information and pass it along."

For now, Bowens isn't sure if his life will lead down the coaching path or the administrative path. But, at the age of 25, Bowens knows that it is good to have plenty of options.

"I feel that I'm marketable," Bowens said. "If I want to go up in the administrative part of it, I can. I never thought I'd be in the administrative part. I thought I'd be an on-the-field coach. I'm young, I can still coach or go into administrative part. The options are open. Maybe one day I'm a head coach, maybe one day I'm an athletics director. Right now I don't have a preference. I'm just enjoying whatever God has in store for me and my family.."

The Tim Bowens File

Assignment: Coordinator of High School Relations/Clinics/Camps
First year at Alabama
First year with Coach Shula

Personal:
Born: May 17, 1978
Wife: Lakesha; son: Timothy

Education:
1984 Alabama, General Health Studies

Playing Experience:

1996-1999	Alabama, wide receiver

Coaching Experience:

2003-	Alabama, Director of High School Relations
2002	Tanner High School, Head Coach
2001	Coffee High School, Assistant Coach

Bowl Experience:
As a player: 2000 Orange, 1998 Music City, 1997 Outback

Graduate Assistants

Paul Hogan Jason Jones Josh Lawson

You gotta start somewhere.

That's a common theme among many hard-working Americans in today's society, but it's especially true for a college football graduate assistant coach. A graduate assistant puts in the long hours that regular coaches put in, and also has to balance that with a class schedule.

There are three graduate assistants on the Crimson Tide coaching staff, and Coach Mike Shula is likely to add two more. Paul Hogan is the offensive on-the-field graduate assistant, Jason Jones is the defensive on-the-field graduate assistant, and Josh Lawson handles videos of potential prospects for the recruiting office. These graduate assistants don't have specific position duties or recruiting territories. But otherwise the differences in graduate assistants and full-time assistants are minimal.

"Coach Shula treats me like a coach," Hogan said. "He treats me like I'm an assistant coach. There's no difference between me and another coach. I don't get paid as much, but I get my school paid for, and the experience I'm getting now is priceless."

A college football team is permitted a head coach and no more than nine full-time assistant coaches, so the graduate assistant is critical to success. The graduate assistant coaches on the field and can also provide input regarding personnel or schemes.

"I think it's very important to have that extra hand, like a 'Can you get this done for me?' type person," Hogan said. "I think as long as everybody's working together as a team, its well worth it to have a graduate assistant on board who will work his butt off."

Hogan played for the Tide from 1996-2000, starting at center for the majority of his career. After a brief stint with the NFL's Oakland Raiders, Hogan tried to latch on as a graduate assistant under Dennis Franchione, but there wasn't enough room. He volunteered at Georgia for one season, and spent last season as the offensive video graduate assistant.

Hogan spends his time analyzing other teams' defense. As the season is starting in late August, Hogan studies aspects such as the opponents' defensive fronts, blitz schemes, and coverages, and tries to find ways to attack other teams and expose the defensive weaknesses. A lot of time is spent breaking down film, and Hogan stresses how important it is to stay ahead. By the time the week of the South Florida game arrives, Hogan already wants to be breaking down film of the next opponent, Oklahoma.

"Coach Shula harps on not wasting your time," Hogan said. "Always be doing something constantly during the day. Don't waste your time."

Hogan spent last season as the offensive video graduate assistant, but isn't sure whether or not he'll be on the field during the games this season. In practices, he works mostly with the offensive linemen and Coach Bobby Connelly, but in the off-season works under Offensive Coordinator Dave Rader.

Jones came back to The Capstone in April, when then-coach Mike Price hired him as a graduate assistant. Jones played safety for the Tide for four years before graduating with a degree in financial planning. After working for two years as a loan officer, Jones felt that coaching was the occupation for him.

"Tim Bowens asked me one Friday night when he was head coach at Tanner to come speak to his guys before the game," Jones said. "I went to Tanner and spoke to his team. During the game I was standing on the sidelines and that's when I realized that's what I wanted to do."

Jones will be working as the on-the-field defensive graduate assistant, and will assist Chris Ball with the secondary in the fall. During the off-season, he helped Defensive Coordinator Joe Kines scout the opponents' offenses. The job involved breaking down film from games to try to predict what the other team will be doing offensively this year.

"My duties include breaking down video from week to week, looking at games, so we can find the tendencies whether a team likes to run on first down, their favorite formation, stuff like that," Jones said.

Jones will be in graduate school for his MBA, but wants to continue as a coach. Since he won't have a full load of classes until the fall, he isn't sure yet of the workload he will endure, but knows already that coaching is definitely different than playing.

"Being a player, the only thing the staff wants you to worry about is to know what to do and to line up on Saturday," Jones said. "Going into coaching, there's a lot of work that goes into it. It really surprised me how much work is in the back end that a lot of people don't know about."

Lawson spent two years as a volunteer assistant on Dennis Franchione's staff, but was elevated to the graduate assistant position for this season. Unlike Jones and Hogan, who will be working on the field, Lawson spends much of his time in the office editing videotapes of potential recruits. Lawson also assists players in finding housing, and other administrative duties. But when it comes to dealing with coaches, Lawson won't have much to discuss with Mike Shula.

"I don't deal with the head coach that much," he said. "I deal mostly with Randy Ross. I spend a lot of time with the assistant coaches."

The difference between the graduate assistants and the players is only a few years in age. Jones and Hogan were seniors when this year's crop of true seniors and redshirt juniors were freshmen. Back then, they could be buddies. While the coaches can and should care about the players, there's a line to be drawn.

"To be a good coach you have to be able to relate to someone, and you have to love them and love what you do," Hogan said. "It helps being almost the same age. In a way they respect you because they've seen you play and perform and seen you lead a team. But you have to separate yourself a little bit. You can't be buddy-buddy with them, but you can still have fun while you're out there."

A final difference between graduate assistants and full-time coaches is that graduate assistants have the responsibility of balancing classwork and coaching. Since Hogan and Jones played for the Tide, they can compare it to juggling a full load of classes while handling playing duties. The University provides room and board, but only a small stipend. The graduate assistants say that during the season, they will arrive at work around 7 a.m., but with class, meetings, and practice, often won't arrive home until midnight. It's not an easy life to lead, but the dues must be paid in order to advance in the coaching business.

"Its tough but as long as you stay on top of the work that you have to do and make your own schedule and stick to that, you'll be fine," Hogan said.

Problems can arise when a graduate assistant comes to the office from class and has to get caught up, but for Lawson, the hectic schedule is no problem. For now, anyway.

"I'm single, so working 12-14 hours isn't all that bad," he said.

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PAUL "BEAR" BRYANT

by Steve Townsend

If not for the day of infamy, December 7, 1941, Paul William Bryant's college football coaching legend might have been rooted in his home state's University of Arkansas rather than at his alma mater, The University of Alabama.

Traveling across the state of Tennessee from Nashville with famed New York Yankees catcher Bill Dickey, also an Arkansas native, Bryant was en route to finalize a deal with the governor of the "Land of Opportunity" to take over the sagging hopes of the Razorbacks.

Then a young assistant for Vanderbilt's Red Sanders, Bryant recalled the story years later, noting, "We were fidgeting with an old radio and the news came across what had happened at Pearl Harbor. Neither Bill nor I said a word; just turned around and headed back to Nashville. And in Nashville, Bryant would do as thousands of others–enlist in the Navy. He would rise to the rank of Lieutenant Commander. And when World War II ended, Bryant began a coaching career that would end in Tuscaloosa, not Fayetteville. The first stop as a college head coach would be in College Park, Maryland, followed by tours at Lexington, Kentucky, and College Station, Texas.

The Bryant story began in 1913 on September 11 (another date that would become infamous in American history) in Moro Bottom, a three-square mile plot of land where seven families lived on the outskirts of Fordyce, Arkansas. He was the 11th of 12 children born to Ida Kilgore and William Monroe Bryant. When he was 11 the family moved to Fordyce, a relative metropolis of 3,600.

Though 1927 was famous for Lindbergh and Ruth, it was also the year in which Bryant forever earned the sobriquet of Bear when he wrestled one at the Lyric Theatre for what was to be a dollar a minute. The sprawling young teenager never got paid, but he got a nickname that personified his strength and iron resolution to compete–and to win.

The tale of him playing in the first game he ever saw is accurate. He demonstrated his fondness for this intense game by having a cobbler screw cleats into his only pair of shoes; and he wore them "proudly" wherever he went. By his senior year in 1930, he helped the Red Bugs to the state championship along with his buddies, the Kilgore twins, who happened to be so good that the Razorbacks wanted them.

Alabama Assistant Coach Hank Crisp showed up in Fordyce, and was unruffled when he learned the Kilgores were bound for Fayetteville. The aggressive end named Bryant was the one Coach Hank wanted for Alabama. No one could have known then how important that would be to the fate of Crimson Tide football.

During his playing career at Alabama, Bryant played on the first ever SEC Championship team in 1933, plowed away as the other end to Don Hutson on the 1934 squad that perfected its season with a 29-13 win over Stanford in the Rose Bowl, and helped whip Tennessee in Knoxville 25-0 in 1935 despite competing with a broken bone in his left leg.

Professional football in the 1930s was far from the sport it is today, and for Bryant the allure of coaching far outweighed playing in the NFL. He and Mary Harmon Black had secretly married before the 1935 season ("I was scared to tell Coach Frank Thomas because I was scared he'd take my scholarship away," Bryant once said), and his first coaching job was at tiny Union College in Tennessee, where he

was brought in to install the Notre Dame box offense.

He wasn't at Union long, though, as Thomas hired him a few months later at $1,250 a year as an assistant coach at Alabama before the 1936 season. After his two-year (1940-41) stint at Vanderbilt, Bryant served in North Africa before being assigned as an instructor at Navy Pre-Flight in 1944. It was there in North Carolina he began his head coaching career.

Then it was off to Maryland where he made the Terps instant winners, going 6-2-1 in 1946 before infusing Kentucky's moribund program with its glory years, including an SEC championship in 1950. The Wildcats' stunning 13-7 victory over national champ Oklahoma in the 1951 Sugar Bowl, ending a 31-game winning streak, bannered Bryant's name on the headlines of newspapers across the country. The "Oklahoma Defense," which Bryant contrived to stop the Sooners, is still a football staple.

After his four years at Texas A&M, Bryant finally came home in 1958 and elevated his Alabama Crimson Tide from the dregs to the elite of college football.

What he achieved in numbers during that quarter-century stretch of years from 1958-82 may be surpassed but his all-encompassing aura–charisma in a houndstooth hat–will never be matched. Here was a man whose shadow dwarfed his peers and literally put him on a stage with Presidents and superstars, yet he was a man who never forgot his beginnings.

There are debates over how many national championships Alabama has won, but none can dispute Paul Bryant won five Associated Press national titles, one more than Notre Dame's Frank Leahy, his closest contender and two more than Oklahoma's Bud Wilkinson and Barry Switzer.

He won 14 SEC Championships, eight more than Ole Miss' Johnny Vaught, Georgia's Vince Dooley and Florida's Steve Spurrier. Three times the National Coach of the Year and nine times the AP SEC Coach of the Year, his name now symbolizes the Football Writers' National Award winner.

In his 38-year head coaching career his record was 323-85-17, and his 25-year mark at Bama was 232-46-9.

Perhaps, his old buddy John McKay, the legendary Southern California coach, summed up the Bryant mystique best when he said, "There are a lot of good football coaches but there was only one Paul Bryant. With that chiseled face of his and the walk and the talk, he looked like he was playing a part in a movie every day of his life. But Paul was the genuine article, the best and last of a breed."

BRYANT-DENNY

by Steve Townsend

If all goes according to plans initiated by Director of Athletics Mal Moore in the capital campaign for athletics, Bryant-Denny Stadium will continue its growth pattern and by the end of this decade seat more than 90,000 fans.

The evolution of the stadium has been significant from its origins back in 1929 when 12,000 seats were erected for a Crimson Tide team coached by Wallace Wade and featuring All-America lineman Fred Sington. Among those in attendance at the inaugural game, a 55-0 win over Mississippi College on September 28, was a young teenager from Tuscaloosa, Bert Bank.

"I watched the first game at Denny Stadium when Wade was the coach," said Bank, who amazingly has been on a first name basis with every coach from Wade to Mike Shula. "I remembered the dedication game was against Ole Miss a few weeks later. To see the stadium now and remember it then, is what you call progress. I've seen all the expansions and I hope to see this next one as well."

The progress continued in the 1930s, during the heart of the Frank Thomas Era, when Denny Stadium increased in size to approximately 24,000. When bleachers were added in 1946, the stadium seated 31,000.

Alabama was coming off a perfect season in 1945, a team that featured All-Americas Harry Gilmer and Vaughn Mancha, and beat Southwestern Louisiana 54-0 before a record crowd of 31,000 on October 12, 1946.

When Paul Bryant returned to Alabama in 1958, he found Denny Stadium unchanged (but for wear and tear) from 1946. The legendary coach, who was also athletics director, mapped out details for an additional 12,000 seats and a new press box with an elevator that was completed in time for the run to the national title in 1961. In the first game on October 14, with 43,000 sold out seats, the Tide beat North Carolina State, 26-7.

After national titles in 1964-65 and with an increasing demand for tickets, Bryant implemented an expansion of 17,000 seats, upping the capacity to 60,000 in 1966. The first game in the expanded stadium was on October 8, a 26-0 victory over Clemson, coached by Frank Howard. Howard had been an Alabama player when the first game was played at Denny Stadium in 1929.

During the summer of 1975, Bert Bank, who had matured from a teenage fan to a World War II hero to a state senator, used his political clout to have the stadium re-named Bryant-Denny Stadium. On April 10, 1976, during the annual A-Day game, the official dedication took place.

Alabama's Bryant-Denny experienced a first on November 17, 1979, when ABC, with Al Michaels calling the play-by-play, aired the first ever live TV game from campus, a 30-0 win over Miami.

Other on-campus arenas had outpaced Alabama in refurbishing and expansions, as the Crimson Tide continued to play most of its key games at Legion Field in Birmingham. That would change dramatically in the 1980s.

Ray Perkins, the athletics director as well as the head coach, assigned Associate AD Jim Goostree with the oversight of the renovation of the West side of Bryant-Denny. After Alabama beat Temple in the final game of the 1986 Tuscaloosa schedule, construction began on the upper deck, new press box, Ivory Club, President's Club and locker rooms.

After playing its entire home schedule at Legion Field in Birmingham

in 1987, the Tide returned to a 70,123-seat configuration. It was also the first season of Tide Pride and in the home opener, Alabama beat Vanderbilt 44-10 on September 24.

It was a difficult day for the game management folk, though, and not just because of the record crowd. The utility overload caused all water lines to cease working, creating a nightmare situation in the concession and restroom areas.

The modernization process continued in 1991 when the Astroturf surface was lifted after 21 years and replaced with natural grass, which was in place for the 10-0 victory over Georgia in an ESPN night game.

During the Friday warm-ups prior to the 1994 game against Tennessee in Knoxville, then-Bama Athletics Director Cecil "Hootie" Ingram discussed with Volunteers Associate AD and Stadium Manager Gus Manning yet another addition planned for Tennessee's Neyland Stadium. Ingram decided then it was time to start the process for the enlargement of Bryant-Denny.

Upon his return to Tuscaloosa, Ingram broached the subject with University President Roger Sayers and planning for the next addition was underway.

It was a tedious and political process, with houses on sorority row having to be razed and considerable underground utility work completed before the actual building could commence. Finally, in 1998, nearly four years after procedures had begun, the 83,818 seat Bryant-Denny Stadium opened. Brigham Young came to Tuscaloosa to serve as the opponent in a September night game that featured a five-TD effort by Shaun Alexander in Alabama's 38-31 victory.

This game was actually scheduled by Glen Tuckett, who served as Alabama's interim AD during the 1995-96 school year. Tuckett came to The Capstone after serving as BYU's athletics director for 25 years. "I knew the stadium would be finished in time for the 1998 season and I thought it would be a natural for the dedication to the renovated stadium," Tuckett said.

Today Bryant-Denny is considered one of the nation's most beautiful and most functional college football stadiums. The structure includes 85 skyboxes as well as premier locker room areas for not only the Crimson Tide but visiting teams as well. Posh rooms for scholarship donors as well as the A-Club are featured sections of the inner area of the East side.

The next addition will be to the north end zone and include more skyboxes as well as club level seating and the traditional bleacher seats. Additionally, stretching from University Boulevard to the north side of the stadium will be a dramatic plaza.

NATIONAL CHAMPIONS

by Kirk McNair

The NCAA does not have a national championship playoff for Division 1A football. Since 1869 there have been some 30 selectors of national champions using polls, historical research, and mathematical rating systems. While we have identified 23 Alabama teams receiving national championship recognition, the NCAA website lists 17 Crimson Tide teams as national champions.

Once upon a time, Alabama (and virtually every other major college) claimed only those national championships that were awarded by the wire services, the Associated Press (begun in 1936) and United Press International (1950). Since 1991 the Coaches Poll has been conducted by USA Today and CNN and the UPI poll was discontinued after the 1995 season. The Coaches Poll is now conducted by USA Today and ESPN. A few years ago a number of teams began listing national championships awarded by other entities, in some cases awards that were determined not in the year in which the games were played, but at a later date. Alabama has rightfully taken advantage of the research to honor those teams that were considered best in the land prior to the wire service polls. And the 1925, 1926, 1930, and 1934 teams–all undefeated Rose Bowl squads–certainly deserve the recognition.

Those four join the seven Alabama teams crowned national champions by one or both of the wire service polls–1961, 1964, 1965, 1973, 1978, 1979, and 1992.

The National Championship is important at Alabama. Even though he was not a player or even an assistant coach when the national championship was an annual goal, Coach Paul Bryant was the man who started the national championship obsession at Alabama. And the drive to win the national title may be the reason Bama won six under Bryant. Or did Alabama win more than six in that 25-year period?

In recent years, Alabama settled on 12 as the number of national championships it would claim. While most Bama fans have that number in mind, it is ironic that attention to the number of Bama national championships is greater by fans of Tide opponents than it is by Alabama followers.

The story has it that a number of years ago someone in the Alabama athletics department, aware of how much it bothered the fans of Auburn that Alabama had so many national championships, decided to stake claim on the least notable of the national championships recognized by the NCAA: The 1941 Alabama team.

Unfortunately, the joke backfired to a certain extent. Enemies of Alabama are wont to aver that Alabama's national championship claims are bogus, and those enemies cite the 1941 team as evidence. Thus, that 1941 claim has proved to be an embarrassment to Bama. The University of Alabama athletics department is nearing implementation of its Crimson Tradition capital improvements and expansion, and one facet is the extensive remodeling of the football building to include a Hall of Honor. There was a thorough examination of the credentials of teams and individuals for inclusion in this Hall of Honor. While no final determination of which national championship teams would be included in this Hall of Honor as of this writing, there is strong sentiment for not including the 1941 team.

The 1941 team certainly has a place in history. It is legendary for its 29-21 Cotton Bowl victory over Texas A&M. That Crimson Tide squad managed 29 points and a victory despite making only one

first down and having only 75 yards of total offense. And at some point a national championship was awarded to that Bama team by something known as the Houlgate System. But that team had only a 9-2 record, and the losses were both shutouts–to Mississippi State and Vanderbilt. That team was third in the Southeastern Conference and 20th in the final Associated Press poll.

While the proposal to delete the 1941 team from the honor roll of Alabama's national championship teams is reasonable, so is another proposal that was being considered–to add one or two of the other Alabama teams with national championship credentials to the Hall of Honor. Those are the 1945 and 1966 teams, both undefeated and untied and bowl champions.

The 1945 team went undefeated, including a 34-14 win over Southern Cal in the Rose Bowl. That Crimson Tide squad finished second in the nation to an Army team that was enjoying the fruits of having taken players from throughout the nation during World War II. But Army did not play in a bowl game and was clearly not playing on the same field as the college teams. (Navy, by the way, with the same advantage as Army, finished third behind Alabama in the AP poll.) Three selectors, including the National Championship Foundation, picked Bama number one. In any event, in 1945 almost no one talked about the national championship and everyone was interested in the team that won the Rose Bowl.

The 1966 Bama team was also undefeated and untied, yet finished third in the most indefensible AP balloting since 1957. (In 1957 almost no one was concerned with the national championship. All AP clients, including rural radio stations, were allowed to vote. After a underhanded campaign in the final week gave the national championship to a team on probation for buying players, the AP changed its procedures. Those changes propelled the AP national championship to importance.)

Alabama's 1966 team followed national championship teams in 1964 and 1965. Alabama had benefitted by AP changes in procedure in both years. Prior to 1964, the national championship was based only on regular season play. But when national champion Alabama lost a controversial Orange Bowl game to Texas, the AP decided to include bowl games in national championship balloting beginning with the 1965 season. Ironically, Alabama lost its opening game that year and later suffered a tie at the hands of Tennessee. But on New Year's Night in the Orange Bowl, Bama faced off against Nebraska in a game that–owing to previous bowl game results during the day–would be for the national championship. Bama thrashed the Cornhuskers and won its second straight AP title and third in five years.

In 1966 Alabama went undefeated and untied and went to the Sugar Bowl where Alabama again stomped Nebraska, 34-7. But that year Notre Dame, which didn't go to Bowl Games as a matter of principle, and Michigan State, which was not eligible for the Rose Bowl under an unusual Big Ten rule, played to a tie. The AP decided to revert to its no bowl policy and Notre Dame was selected its champion. But six selectors, including the National Championship Foundation, went with Alabama as national champion for a third consecutive year.

Because the wire service polls were so little considered in 1945, that Bama squad is more likely to make it into Bama's Hall of Honor than is the 1966 team.

Suppose Alabama claimed those 13 teams. They would be: 1925 (10-0, Rose Bowl win), 1926 (9-0-1, Rose Bowl tie), 1930 (10-0, Rose Bowl win), 1934 (10-0-0, Rose Bowl win), 1945 (10-0-0, Rose Bowl win), 1961 (11-0-0, Sugar Bowl win), 1964 (10-1-0, Orange Bowl loss), 1965 (9-1-1, Orange Bowl win), 1966 (11-0-0, Sugar Bowl win), 1973 (11-1-0, Sugar Bowl loss), 1978 (11-1-0, Sugar Bowl win), 1979 (12-0-0, Sugar Bowl win), and 1992 (13-0-0, Sugar Bowl win).

The records of those 13 teams is 137-4-2.

The ten Alabama teams with national championship credentials not claimed would be: 1936 (8-0-1, no bowl, 4th in AP), 1937 (9-1, Rose Bowl loss, 4th in AP), 1941 (9-2, Cotton Bowl win, 20th in AP), 1950 (9-2, no bowl, 16th in AP), 1962 (10-1, Orange Bowl win, 5th in AP), 1963 (9-2, Sugar Bowl win, 8th in AP), 1974 (11-1, Orange Bowl loss, 5th in AP), 1975 (11-1, Sugar Bowl win, 3rd in AP), 1977 (11-1, Sugar Bowl win, 2nd in AP), and 1980 (10-2, Cotton Bowl win, 6th in AP).

In any event, it is obvious that Alabama ranks among the very highest echelon of college football programs by the national championship standard.

BY THE NUMBERS

All-Time SEC Standings

School	Years	Games	Won-Lost-Tied	Pct.
ALABAMA	**69**	**480**	***324-136-20**	**.696**
Tennessee	69	440	*281-140-19	.660
Georgia	70	440	252-174-14	.589
Florida	68	431	236-180-15	.565
LSU	70	445	236-187-22	.555
Auburn	69	459	243-198-18	.549
Mississippi	69	435	218-202-15	.518
Arkansas	11	88	*41-45-2	.477
South Carolina	11	88	*32-55-1	.369
Mississippi State	69	445	*148-285-12	.346
Kentucky	69	439	136-291-12	.324
Vanderbilt	68	447	*106-324-18	.257
Former Members				
Georgia Tech	31	194	115- 70- 9	.616
Tulane	33	195	69-113-13	.387
Sewanee	8	37	0- 37- 0	.000

SEC Championships By Schools

ALABAMA–21

(1933-34t-37-45-53-61t-64-65-66t-71-72-73-74-75-77-78-79-81t-89t-92-99)

Tennessee–13 ('38-39t-40-46t-51t-56-67-69-85-89t-90-97-98)
Georgia–10 ('42-46t-48-59-66t-68-76t-80-81t-82-02)
LSU–8 ('35-36-38-61t-70-86-88t-01)
Florida–6 ('91-93-94-95-96-00)
Ole Miss–6 ('47-54-55-60-62-63)
Auburn–5 ('57-83-87-88t-89t)
@Georgia Tech–5 ('39t-43-44-51t-52)
@Tulane–3 ('34-39t-49)
Kentucky–2 ('50-76t)
Mississippi State–1 ('41)
Vanderbilt–0
Arkansas–0
South Carolina–0
@Sewanee–0
@Denotes former member of SEC

All-Time Winningest Schools

	Team	W	L	T	Pct.
1.	Notre Dame	791	250	42	.750
2.	Michigan	823	269	36	.746
3.	**ALABAMA**	***754**	**284**	**43**	**.717**
4.	Oklahoma	725	282	53	.709
5.	Texas	766	306	33	.7081
6.	Ohio State	745	292	53	.7078
7.	Nebraska	771	308	40	.707
8.	Tennessee	726	299	52	.698
9.	Penn State	753	322	41	.693
10.	Southern Cal	695	296	54	.691

All-Time Bowl Victories

1.	**ALABAMA**	**29**
2.	Southern Cal	26
3.	Penn State	23
	Oklahoma	23
	Tennessee	23
6.	Nebraska	20
	Georgia Tech	20
	Georgia	19
	Texas	19
10.	Florida State	18
	Mississippi	18
	Michigan	18

All-Time Bowl Appearances

1.	**ALABAMA**	**51**
2.	Tennessee	43
3.	Texas	42
4.	Southern Cal	41
	Nebraska	41
6.	Georgia	38
7.	Penn State	37
8.	Oklahoma	36
9.	LSU	34
	Ohio State	34
	Michigan	34

All-Time Wins

1.	Michigan	823
2.	Notre Dame	791
3.	Nebraska	771
4.	Texas	766
5.	**ALABAMA**	***754**
6.	Penn State	753
7.	Ohio State	745
8.	Tennessee	*726
9.	Oklahoma	725
10.	Southern Cal	695
11.	Georgia	662
12.	Syracuse	652
13.	LSU	636
14.	Washington	632
15.	Colorado	630

*Includes 8 on-the-field Alabama victories and 1 tie listed as losses from 1993 season, games the NCAA forced Alabama to forfeit

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THE 2003 CRIMSON TIDE

by Drew Champlin

79 J.P. Adams

Defensive Tackle • Freshman • 6-4, 261
Northport • Tuscaloosa County HS

Adams finished spring practice on a good note, winning the coaches' award for Best Walk-On. He will be counted on to provide depth on the defensive line, and could see some back-up game action if he continues to improve. His father is the dean of the School of Social Work. Adams came to Bama as a defensive end candidate, but was moved to tackle in the spring.

73 Dennis Alexander

Right Guard • Senior • 6-6, 345
Memphis, Tenn. • Westwood HS

As a junior, Alexander saw action in every game as a back-up to Marico Portis. Although Alexander was a Freshman All-America and Freshman All-SEC in 2000 after starting seven games, he was beaten out by Portis the past two seasons. Alexander has struggled maintaining a solid playing weight the past two seasons, but was named Most Improved Lineman following spring practice. His target weight is 320 pounds. Alexander logged 115 snaps last season and recorded 11 knockdown blocks. Portis has graduated and Alexander is number one on the depth chart at right guard.

47 Mark Anderson

Defensive End • Sophomore • 6-6, 230
Tulsa, Okla. • Booker T. Washington HS

Anderson played in every game during his redshirt freshman season, recording 13 tackles on the season. He recorded two sacks, one tackle behind the line of scrimmage, and forced two fumbles with one recovery. Anderson played a season-high 20 snaps against Georgia last season, the game where he had the fumble recovery. Anderson backed up outside linebacker Brooks Daniels last season, but moved to defensive end in the spring and earned the award for Most Improved Defensive Lineman.

10 Carlos Andrews

Strong Safety • Junior • 6-0, 216
Tallahassee, Fla. • Godby HS

Andrews played in every game last season, logging 153 snaps as primary back-up to the graduated Waine Bacon. Andrews did start against North Texas, where he had a season-high five tackles. In the A-Day game, Andrews led all Tide defenders with nine tackles and recorded an interception. Andrews saw limited action in 2000 and 2001, and received a medical redshirt for the 2001 season where he played only 14 snaps in the first two games. Andrews should contend for the starting strong safety role vacated by Bacon this season.

12 Jeffrey Aul

Punter • Freshman • 6-2, 200
Daleville • Daleville HS

Aul nearly saw his first collegiate action as a true freshman the week after Lane Bearden tore his ACL, when he dressed out against Georgia. He battled with Michael Ziifle and Bo Freeland in the spring, and the position is open going to the fall. Aul was a two-year starter in high school as a punter and placekicker. He is a walk-on who has good form, but must show consistency.

11 Brandon Avalos

Quarterback • Freshman • 6-0, 175
Tuscaloosa • Hillcrest HS

Avalos, a redshirt last season, is behind Brodie Croyle and Spencer Pennington. He is the fastest of the quarterbacks. He missed the A-Day game due to an emergency appendectomy two days before. Avalos started for three years at Hillcrest, at wide receiver as a sophomore and quarterback as a junior and senior. His sophomore season, he caught a school-record 49 passes for 705 yards and 5 touchdowns. In his career, Avalos totaled over 3800 all-purpose yards. *The Sporting News* labeled him as one of the nation's top 25 high school quarterbacks. Avalos also plays baseball for the Crimson Tide.

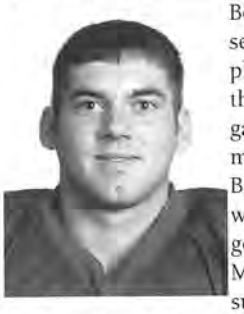
56 Todd Bates

Defensive End • Junior • 6-4, 252
Heflin • Cleburne County HS

Bates will not play this season as a result of an NCAA suspension. He was suspended for inadvertantly using a product that contained a banned substance. If eligible, Bates would have contended for a starting position at defensive end. Bates will not be able to regain his season of eligibility, and will play the 2004 season as a senior. He was the only true freshman to see action in 2001 and last year played in every game, posting 28 tackles, including two behind the line of scrimmage.

22 Brian Bostick

Placekicker • Junior • 5-9, 216
Cullman • Cullman HS



Bostick opened last season as backup placekicker, but won the job for a few games during the midd of the season. Bostick's career-long was a 39-yard field goal against Southern Miss. He converted successfully on three field goals and three extra points in the Tide's 30-12 win at Arkansas. In high school, Bostick also played wide receiver, setting several school records at that position. Bostick eventually lost the placekicking job to Kyle Robinson late in the season, but did handle kickoff duties for the final four games.

52 Taylor Britt

Defensive Tackle • Sophomore • 6-4, 279
Cullman • Cullman HS

Britt has not played the last two seasons, but has practiced. After redshirting during the 2001 season at UAB, Britt transferred to Alabama to play with older brother Wesley, an all-star offensive tackle. As a transfer, Britt had to sit out the 2002 season. Britt was an all-state lineman and was the indoor 5A shot put champion in high school. Britt will be counted on to provide depth at defensive tackle.

70 Wesley Britt

Left Tackle • Junior • 6-8, 315
Cullman • Cullman HS

After his sophomore season, his second as a starter, Britt was named All-SEC . Britt has started every game in his Tide career,. Britt graded 96 per cent or better in 12 of 13 games last season, and finished with 195 pancake blocks. He graded 100 percent in games against Ole Miss and LSU, and graded at 99 per cent against Oklahoma and Auburn. His freshman season, Britt graded 100 per cent in four games. Britt was selected to the *Playboy* pre-season All-America team, but declined the honor for religious reasons. He is on the Lombardi Award "watch list" and a second team pre-season All-America by *Sporting News*.

5 Brandon Brooks

Wide Receiver • Sophomore • 5-4, 162
Birmingham • Shades Valley HS

The smallest player on the team, Brooks holds the receiver record for fastest time in the 40-yard dash, 4.35 seconds. However, Brooks has had a hard time finding a spot in the wide receiver rotation. He saw spot duty in one game last season following a redshirt year in 2001. Brooks starred at Shades Valley High School as a kick returner, wide receiver, and defensive back. He also won the 55-meter dash state championship his junior and senior seasons. Brooks could be used as a kick returner and/or punt returner, as well as a wide receiver.

93 Jonathan Brunson

Defensive End • Junior • 6-3, 248
Hartford • Geneva County HS

Brunson is a walk-on defensive end who has improved every season since he has been at Alabama. With the loss of two veteran ends, Brunson has made it onto the depth chart and could make the travel squad. He has not seen any action in two years. He was a long snapper at Samford in 2000 and would be considered the back-up in that role this season behind Nick Ridings.

97 Anthony Bryant

Defensive Tackle • Senior • 6-3, 348
Newbern • Sunshine HS

Bryant played in all 13 games in 2002, primarily as a backup at nose tackle. He started the final game of the season, at Hawaii. Bryant finished with 32 tackles, two stops behind the line, four quarterback pressures, one forced fumble, and one fumble recovery. Bryant set a school record in the Night of Champions in 2002 when he handled 755 pounds in the squat. Bryant played sparingly in 2001, after sitting out the 2000 season as a partial qualifier. He expects to regain his fourth year of eligibility by graduating before the 2004 season. In high school he was first-team *USA Today* and *Parade* All-America. Bryant is first on the depth chart at nose tackle this season.

2 Antonio Carter

Wide Receiver • Senior • 5-9, 188
Tallahassee, Fla. • Richards HS

Expected to be Alabama's top receiver last season, Carter spent it as a redshirt on the sidelines recovering from surgery to heal a fractured tibia. Carter endured another setback during the spring, when he was forced to sit out due to recurring problems in his leg. His 106 career receptions tie him for fourth all-time in Alabama history, and he is only 46 behind career leader Freddie Milons. His 1,294 career receiving yards is 10th all time. As a true freshman, Carter led the team with four receptions for 38 yards and one touchdown in the Orange Bowl.

92 David Cavan

Tight end • Junior • 6-4, 259
Northport • American Christian Academy

Cavan started the first two games of last season against Middle Tennessee State and Oklahoma, but wound up missing six games as a result of a head injury. Cavan caught two passes last season, including a 15-yard touchdown pass from Tyler Watts in the season opener. Cavan has good speed and hands to play a major role as a receiving tight end. His father, Pete, played halfback for coach Paul Bryant from 1975-77. His uncle, Mike, was formerly head coach at SMU.

95 Ahmad Childress

Defensive Tackle • Junior • 6-5, 358
Nashville, Tenn. • Whites Creek Academy

Childress came to Bama after playing at Garden City Community College in Kansas, but played only one year of junior college football, leaving him three years of eligibility. Childress was backup to Kenny King last season, but is expected to start this year. His biggest moment came against Tennessee when he intercepted a pass and returned it 24 yards. Childress started games against LSU and Auburn but broke his wrist against Auburn. The injury required surgery and forced Childress to miss the season finale against Hawaii. Last year he had 24 tackles and 10 quarterback pressures.

99 Jeremy Clark

Defensive Tackle • Freshman • 6-2, 287
Daphne • Daphne HS

Clark emerged from spring practice as a top back-up on the defensive line. Clark, who redshirted last season, helped Daphne to the state championship his senior season. He was a high school teammate of former Tide lineman Kenny King and current Tider Atlas Herrion. Clark recorded 80 tackles and nine sacks his senior season, and recorded 65 tackles and seven sacks his junior season.

93 Donald Clarke

Tight End • Senior • 6-4, 264
Boca Raton, Fla. • Spanish River HS

Clarke finished last season with seven receptions for 153 yards, an amazing 21.9 yards per reception from the tight end position. Clarke started seven games last season. Originally brought in as a blocking tight end, Clarke's hands have improved tremendously, something that will give him a chance to play more his senior season. Clarke was an all-conference pick his freshman season at Fort Scott Community College in Kansas.

74 J.B. Closner

Center • Sophomore • 6-4, 280
San Antonio, Texas • Clark HS

Closner enters his sophomore year in the spotlight. He has the difficult task of replacing All-SEC center Alonzo Ephraim. J.B. (short for Jon Bennett) saw action in six games, including 22 snaps in the Tide's 30-12 win over Arkansas when Ephraim went down to injury. He was redshirted in 2001. In addition to offensive line, he played defensive tackle and participated in track and field in high school.

49 Nathan Cox

Fullback • Junior • 6-0, 228
Spanish Fort • UMS Wright Prep

Cox is a walk-on who has been a solid member of the practice squad. He saw action in one game last year, against North Texas. With Bama now expected to be looking for depth at fullback (a position that had been abandoned in the Mike Price offense), Cox could contend for playing time. He played in the North Texas game last year. He was a prep linebacker. His father, Allen, played at Alabama.

12 Brodie Croyle

Quarterback • Sophomore • 6-2, 199
Rainbow City • Westbrook Christian HS

It's finally Croyle's time. The former prep All-America enters the season as the Tide's number one quarterback. In the A-Day game, Croyle passed for 260 yards and three touchdowns, winning the Dixie Howell Memorial Award as the game's Most Valuable Player. Croyle played in 12 games last season, starting against Arkansas and Georgia. In his first start, he passed for 285 yards and two touchdowns. Croyle threw for 1,046 yards last season with five touchdowns and five interceptions. His father, John, played for Paul Bryant and his sister, Reagan, played Bama basketball for Rick Moody and was Alabama's homecoming queen in 2000.

18 Brooks Daniels

Linebacker • Senior • 6-2, 198
Jasper, Fla. • Hamilton County HS

Daniels is the only player credited with back-to-back 100-tackle seasons at Alabama. After not starting his true freshman season, Daniels recorded 102 tackles in 2001 and 110 tackles last season. Daniels became the first sophomore since Woodrow Lowe in 1973 to record over 100 tackles in a season. Daniels is a two-time recipient of the Lee Roy Jordan "Headhunter Award" and also won the Most Improved Linebacker award following his freshman season. Daniels was named second-team All-SEC last season.

33 Kenneth Darby

Running back • Freshman • 5-11, 202
Huntsville • Butler HS

After redshirting last season, Darby should see time in the running back rotation this season. Darby rushed for 4,674 yards during his prep career, and was a prep All-America. Darby won the spring award for Most Improved Freshman.

53 Brandon Dean

Middle Linebacker • Junior • 6-1, 232
Mobile • UMS-Wright Prep

Dean, a walk-on, is a valuable member of the scout team. Last year, he saw limited action in one game.

60 Von Ewing

Left Guard • Sophomore • 6-4, 312
Troy • Charles Henderson HS

Ewing served last season as a back-up to tackles Evan Mathis and Wesley Britt. He'll probably continue in a back-up role this year, most likely at guard. He saw his first action against North Texas last season, and played sparingly in three other games. Ewing was the most honored prep offensive lineman in Alabama as a senior, giving up only one sack in his final 21 starts. He was a prep All-America.

49 P.J. Fletcher

Defensive End • Junior • 6-2, 231
Panama City, Fla. • Bay HS

Fletcher is a walk-on who adds experience and strength to the scout team. Although he can play any linebacker position, he was moved to defensive end at the conclusion of spring practice. He was a two-time all-county and all-district player in high school.

80 Zach Fletcher

Wide Receiver • Senior • 6-4, 187
Moulton • Moulton County HS

Fletcher enters this season as perhaps Bama's top deep threat. Fletcher caught only seven balls last season, but for 27.6 yards per catch. All but one of his receptions were 24 yards or longer. Fletcher's longest of his two touchdown receptions came in the Tide's win over Arkansas, a 50-yard strike from Brodie Croyle. Fletcher never lost a game while playing at City College of San Francisco. He started his college career as a junior college basketball player. He caught three passes for 90 yards in the A-Day game, and won the spring award for Most Improved Receiver.

3 Dre Fulgham

Wide Receiver • Senior • 6-1, 225
Montevallo • Montevallo HS

After catching only three passes in two seasons, Fulgham was the Tide's third-leading receiver with 30 catches for 505 yards and three touchdowns last fall. His best game came against Vanderbilt where he caught 5 passes for 92 yards. Fulgham holds a pair of weight room records for receivers, with a 420-pound bench press and 390-pound incline press. Leonard Andre Fulgham was considered the top receiver in Alabama in 1998. Academic issues delayed his entrance into The University until 2000.

42 Juwan Garth

Linebacker • Freshman • 6-3, 204
Decatur • Austin HS

Garth should make an impact in his redshirt freshman season, even as a reserve. He's listed as back-up to Brooks Daniels at weakside linebacker. The winner of the Most Improved Linebacker award in the spring, Garth totaled six tackles in the A-Day game. Although not heavily recruited, Garth was an all-state performer in football and basketball. Former Tide Coach Dennis Franchione said several times that it was very difficult to redshirt the talented Garth last year.

85 Tarry Givens

Wide Receiver • Junior • 6-5, 230
Tallahassee, Fla. • Godby HS

Givens saw spot duty in four games last season but did not catch a pass. He holds the weight room record for receivers in the vertical jump with a 40-inch leap. He was redshirted in 2000 and saw playing time in one game in 2001. He was all-state in high school.

The 2003 Crimson Tide

81 Brandon Greer

Wide Receiver • Senior • 6-0, 196
Rainbow City • Westbrook Christian HS

Greer owns the Alabama high school season record for most touchdown receptions with 30, caught as a senior from then-sophomore Brodie Croyle. Greer is perhaps the best blocking wide receiver on the team. Greer caught his first career pass last season, a 10-yarder from Croyle against Vanderbilt. He played in 2000 and 2001, but did not have a reception. He was 2002 winner of the Ray Perkins Most Improved Receiver Award.

41 Roman Harper

Strong Safety • Sophomore • 6-0, 186
Prattville • Prattville HS

Harper went from winning the Most Improved Freshman Award last season to winning the Most Improved Defensive Back award this past spring. Used as a reserve last season to free safety Charles Jones, Harper ended spring practice number one at the strong safety spot manned by the graduated Waine Bacon last year. As a freshman, Harper finished with 42 tackles, two sacks, two forced fumbles, and one fumble recovery. His career-high in tackles came against Hawaii, when he turned in 11. Harper is one of the faster athletes on the Tide team.

91 Chris Harris

Defensive End • Freshman • 6-6, 239
Tuscaloosa • Central HS

If anyone has the frame to develop into a dominating defensive lineman, it's Chris Harris. The redshirt freshman spent last season gaining strength, and has the frame to shoulder even more weight. He has very good quickness. He was a prep All-America. He was redshirted last season. Harris comes from a football family, his father and two cousins having played college football. Harris also played basketball in high school.

75 Atlas Herrion

Offensive Tackle • Senior • 6-4, 304
Daphne • Daphne

Herrion spent what would have been his senior season last year as a redshirt, after moving back and forth from the offensive to the defensive line. Now back on the offensive line, Herrion looks to be a key backup for tackles Wesley Britt and Evan Mathis. Herrion won the Iron Man award for his weightroom work. He was a junior college All-America at Dodge City in Kansas. Herrion spent the 2001 season as a reserve tackle, but started at quick tackle in the Independence Bowl. He played 150 snaps that season, finishing with 20 knockdown blocks and allowing only one sack.

27 Ray Hudson

Running back • Junior • 5-11, 203
Bonifay, Fla. • Holmes County HS

Hudson was a prime example of a "utility player" for the Tide the past two seasons. He was the fourth-leading rusher with 306 yards and a touchdown, caught three passes for 50 yards and a touchdown, and was the leading kickoff return man with 13 returns for 267 yards. Hudson averaged 47.9 all-purpose yards per game. His best game came against North Texas where he rushed for 82 yards on 7 carries. Hudson redshirted in 2000 as a defensive back. He moved to offense in the fall of 2001. Last spring Hudson won the Most Improved Offensive Back award.

32 Chris James

Free Safety • Junior • 6-0, 195
Albany, Ga. • Dougherty HS

James has put on strength and should play a large role as a backup safety this season. James played in every game last year, playing 215 snaps. He recorded 17 tackles, including a career-high three against LSU. He caused and recovered a fumble against Tennessee and recovered another fumble against Oklahoma. In the spring heading into his sophomore season, James won the Bobby Johns Most Improved Defensive Back award. He was a quarterback in high school.

88 Clint Johnston

Tight End • Sophomore • 6-4, 248
Wetumpka • Wetumpka HS

Johnston made an impact as a redshirt freshman, starting four games and catching 10 passes for 99 yards. Known for his blocking, Johnston's receiving ability has improved and he has a chance to be a starter. Last year he played in every game and started four. He had three catches for 33 yards against Georgia. His long reception was for 24 yards. Johnston caught three passes for 47 yards in the A-Day game. His father, Johnny, and his uncle, Donny, played for Bama.

20 Charles Jones

Free Safety • Senior • 6-0, 183
Waynesboro, Ga. • Burke County HS

Jones blossomed into one of the league's top safeties last season. After winning the starting position in 2001 from then-senior Reggie Myles, Jones has been a solid fixture in the Tide's secondary. Jones was the leading tackler in the secondary, recording 86 tackles. He was named SEC Defensive Player of the Week for his effort against Mississippi State, where he had 10 tackles and one interception. He intercepted two passes last season, and had a 30-yard return of a blocked field goal against Oklahoma.

45 Juke King

Linebacker • Sophomore • 6-0, 232
Theodore • Theodore HS

After coming to Alabama as a safety, King has practiced at linebacker and fullback, before moving back to linebacker after last spring. He saw limited action as a fullback in two games last season, against Vanderbilt and LSU. During the spring he suffered a serious knee injury and is not expected to be ready to play until after the season starts. His real first name is Tersheikiya.

69 Matt Lomax

Center • Senior • 6-2, 295
Mobile • UMS Wright Prep

As a result of knee and hand injuries, Lomax's career has not developed as expected, but he had a very good spring. Lomax backed up Justin Smiley last season and played 26 snaps in five games. In the spring he was moved to center to help with the depth situation. Lomax was a Parade All-America.

84 Triandos Luke

Wide Receiver • Senior • 6-0, 190
Phenix City • Central HS

The Tide's leading receiver last season, Luke caught 41 passes for 482 yards and two touchdowns. Luke also accounted for 196 yards in kickoff returns. He started every game, and had back-to-back 100-yard receiving games against Vanderbilt and Mississippi State. Considered the top receiver in the state of Alabama his senior season, Luke didn't use a redshirt year although he missed time with a broken hand. Luke only caught two passes that season. Luke caught 15 passes for 152 yards his sophomore year for three touchdowns. Luke led all receivers in the A-Day game with 5 catches for 71 yards.

17 Michael Machen

Quarterback • Freshman • 6-6, 230
Mobile • McGill-Toolen HS

After a three-year minor league baseball career, Machen is now a walk-on for the Crimson Tide. He is expected to redshirt this season and learn the system. As a senior in high school in 1999, Machen threw for 1,600 yards and 20 touchdowns. He signed to play baseball at Alabama, but was drafted out of high school by the Atlanta Braves before moving to the Baltimore Orioles organization. Machen also played basketball in high school.

The 2003 Crimson Tide

9 Anthony Madison

Cornerback • Junior • 5-9, 174
Thomasville • Thomasville HS

After a year where he sat out as a partial qualifier, Madison was a reserve, but saw plenty of playing time last year. He started against Georgia. Madison recorded 11 tackles, including one tackle for loss, and six pass break-ups. He was an exceptional high school athlete, playing quarterback, running back, wide receiver, and defensive back. Madison was listed atop the depth chart at cornerback position following spring practice,. He should also see playing time on special teams.

79 Danny Martz

Left Guard • Junior • 6-4, 294
Gaithersburg, Md. • DeMatha Catholic

Martz was redshirted in 2000, played in one game in 2001, then was a back-up in five games last fall. He missed some preseason work this summer after undergoing arthroscopic surgery to remove a "dead spot" on a leg bone. He will be the primary back-up to All-America candidate Justin Smiley this year.

51 Evan Mathis

Right Tackle • Junior • 6-5, 295
Homewood • Homewood HS

Mathis surprised many among Tide faithful in his freshman season when he took over the role of strong tackle from Dante Ellington, a junior who had started since he was a true freshman. Mathis started every game last season and the final nine games in 2001. Remarkably, in Mathis' two seasons as a starter he has played with stress fractures in his legs. He recorded 178 knockdown blocks last year after having had 76 as a freshman. He could play center if needed, which is where he played in high school. Evan is the nephew of former Alabama and Miami Dolphins great Bob Baumhower. He was state champion as a wrestler in high school.

19 Roberto McBride

Cornerback • Senior • 5-9, 167
Lakeland, Fla. • Kathleen HS

Although one of the smallest players on the team, McBride is also one of the strongest. McBride has seen action as Tide's nickel back over the past two seasons and has also returned punts. He should play a key role as a reserve defensive back again this season. McBride earned Iron Man honors at the 2002 Night of Champions. His most productive season was in 2001 when he recorded 24 tackles in 11 games and intercepted his only career pass against Arkansas. McBride ran a 10.6 in the 100-meter dash in high school.

1 Scoop McDowell

Wide Receiver • Freshman • 6-1, 176
Jackson, Miss. • Forest Hill HS

After five years of playing minor league baseball in the San Francisco Giants system, McDowell joins the Tide as a walk-on. McDowell, whose given name is Arturo, can play either wide receiver or defensive back. McDowell was designated the "Fastest Base Runner" in the Giants' organization. He may be redshirted this fall as he continues his return to football. He earned all-state mention in high school.

90 Nautyn McKay-Loescher

Defensive End • Senior • 6-4, 255
Toronto, Canada • Central Tech

McKay-Loescher missed spring practice and was forced to withdraw from school in the spring after a bout with mononucleosis. He returned in the summer and seems on track to be in good football shape. "The Chief" played in every game last season, alternating as a starter with Antwan Odom. He recorded 25 tackles and 4.5 sacks. He also recorded 21 quarterback pressures. Nautyn was considered the top prep defensive player in Canada as a senior when he had 55 tackles and 16 sacks in 10 games.

82 Marcus McKnight

Wide Receiver • Freshman • 6-2, 183
Callahan, Fla. • West Nassau HS

McKnight was the last player to sign a scholarship in the 2002 class, as he was announced as a signee on the first day of freshman practice last fall. McKnight redshirted last season. He had 28 catches for 500 yards and also scored six touchdowns in his senior prep season.

31 Greg McLain

Fullback • Sophomore • 6-2, 246
Lineville • Lineville HS

McLain was one of only two true freshman to play. He was forced into action as a fullback when Donnie Lowe had to give up football due to recurring concussions. McLain started out as a linebacker, but was moved to fullback when Lowe retired. He had 19 carries for 81 yards, and caught three passes for 10 yards. McLain was moved to tight end in the spring under Mike Price's one-back set, but will return to fullback under Mike Shula. Nicknamed "Moose," McLain played fullback, tight end, and linebacker in high school, where he started for four years. He, too, has had some concussion problems.

46 Mike McLaughlin

Placekicker • Sophomore • 6-2, 207
Gautier, Miss. • Gautier HS

After entering Alabama as the nation's number one placekicker prospect and a USA Today All-America, McLaughlin has not seen playing time in two seasons. He gets the ball up and away very quickly, but lacks distance and consistent accuracy. He is Bama's only scholarshipped kicker.

4 Matt Miller

Wide Receiver • Sophomore • 6-2, 207
Rainbow City • Gadsden HS

A walk-on, Miller was moved from quarterback to wide receiver in the spring. Miller is a versatile athlete who can imitate many other teams' best players, whether they are quarterbacks, wide receivers, or running backs. His brother, Mark, was a walk-on for the Tide who played a key role on special teams. His father (Noah) and grandfather (K.O.) were also Tide players.

98 Antwan Odom

Defensive End • Junior • 6-5, 273
Bayou La Batre • Alma Bryant HS

Odom put his 2001 redshirt year into good use, gaining over 40 pounds of muscle. It paid off as he used the added strength with his quickness and finished seventh in the nation in sacks. He led the team with 10 sacks for 76 yards. He also had 42 tackles and 4 stops behind the line while splitting time with Nautyn McKay-Loescher. Antwan was a Parade All-America and was named 6A Lineman of the Year his senior season. As a true freshman in 2000, Odom started in two games and played in every game. He recorded 13 tackles and three sacks. Although only a junior in eligibility, expect this to be his final Tide season as he is listed as a likely top NFL pick.

13 Spencer Pennington

Quarterback • Sophomore • 6-4, 223
Fayette • Fayette County HS

This spring, Pennington decided that two sports weren't for him anymore, and he gave up baseball. After a solid spring, he didn't perform well in the A-Day game, running the second-team unit against the first defense. Pennington finished as number two quarterback to Brodie Croyle. Pennington attempted only one pass last season, a completion for one yard against Vanderbilt. Pennington originally committed to Mississippi State, but signed with Alabama when Dennis Franchione said he could play both football and baseball. He led Fayette County to a 4A state championship as a senior. His brother, Jeremy, was an offensive lineman for the Tide, 1993-1996.

26 Charlie Peprah

Cornerback • Sophomore • 5-11, 198
Plano, Texas • Plano East HS

Peprah made an immediate impact in his redshirt freshman season, earning Freshman All-America and Freshman All-SEC honors by The Sporting News. Peprah started 8 of the Tide's 13 games and played in the rest. He tied with Waine Bacon for the team lead in interceptions with 4, including a 35-yard return for a touchdown against Georgia. He recorded 47 tackles, and combined with Nautyn McKay-Loescher for a sack. His grandfather, I.G. Achampong, served as president of Ghana, West Africa, in the early 1970s. A coup forced his family to move to England, and then to Plano, Texas. His brother played football at Wyoming.

6 Derrick Pope

Linebacker • Senior • 6-0, 223
Galveston, Texas • Ball HS

A junior-college All-America, Pope came to Alabama to play where his uncle, Kenith, coached wide receivers. With the departure of Dennis Franchione went Kenith Pope, but Derrick stayed at Alabama. Pope won the Lee Roy Jordan Headhunter Award following spring practice. Pope finished last season as the Tide's fifth-leading tackler with 65 tackles. He played in every game and started two, splitting time with Freddie Roach. In the Arkansas game he intercepted a pass and returned it 61 yards. Pope also had one sack for a loss of 13 yards. His brother, RoShawn, plays for Houston. Pope's soph year at Garden City Community College, he had 125 tackles.

50 Nick Ridings

Snapper • Senior • 6-0, 246
Marietta, Ga. • Pope HS

Ridings returns to the Tide for his third season as Alabama's long snapper. Although the kicking positions have concerns, the snapping position does not, as Ridings has done an excellent job snapping for punts and field goals. Ridings is a previous winner of the "Best Walk-on Award" and at one time he set a record for special teams players when he lifted 350 pounds in the hang clean. A linebacker in high school, Ridings is often in on tackles on punt coverage.

8 Freddie Roach

Linebacker • Sophomore • 6-2, 251
Killen • Brooks HS

Roach made an immediate impact as a redshirt freshman, earning Freshman All-America and Freshman All-SEC honors. Roach started in 11 of 13 games, splitting time with Derrick Pope. Roach recorded 63 tackles, six tackles for loss, one sack, and had a 41-yard interception return for a touchdown in his first game against Middle Tennessee State. He is the half-brother of former Tide wide receiver and current Director of High School Relations Tim Bowens. Roach's younger brother, Will, signed with the Tide this year.

43 Kyle Robinson

Placekicker • Senior • 5-10, 181
Cleburne, Texas • Ranger JC

The left-footed Robinson won the placekicking job about halfway through last season. A walk-on, Robinson hit 23-of-24 extra points and nailed 6 of his 10 field goal attempts. His longest was a 46-yarder against LSU. His best game came against Vanderbilt, when he hit three field goals. As a sophomore at Ranger Junior College, he was a perfect 5-for-5 in field goal attempts. He enters the fall as number one placekicker.

17 Ramzee Robinson

Cornerback • Freshman • 5-10, 184
Huntsville • Butler HS

Robinson spent last season as a redshirt, but will provide help this season at cornerback. A versatile athlete, Robinson played quarterback and cornerback at 6A Butler High School.. Robinson is also a candidate to return punts, and will be the number one nickel back when Bama has five secondary players.

35 Demeco Ryans

Linebacker • Sophomore • 6-1, 226
Bessemer • Jess Lanier HS

Ryans was one of only two true freshman to play last season, a solid backup to Brooks Daniels and Cornelius Wortham. He started the season finale last year at Hawaii. He recorded 27 tackles, recovered a fumble, and had 2 quarterback pressures. He was considered by most analysts to be the top prep linebacker in the state of Alabama during his senior season.

63 Mark Sanders

Guard • Sophomore • 6-6, 320
Ashville • Ashville HS

Sanders came out of spring practice as the number two right guard behind Dennis Alexander. He was redshirted last season. His brother, Matthew, was a punter at Alabama for a year, but transferred in order to play college baseball.

23 David Scott

Cornerback • Senior • 5-11, 181
Homestead, Fla. • Jones CC

Scott saw action in every game last season, recording 8 tackles. He mostly played as a special teams player, but could see more time at cornerback this year. Scott was a first-team junior college All-America at Jones County in Mississippi. He originally signed with North Carolina, coached at the time by Carl Torbush. When Torbush was fired, Scott transferred to Jones, then reunited with Torbush last season as Torbush was defensive coordinator under Dennis Franchione.

78 Justin Smiley

Left Guard • Junior • 6-4, 302
Ellabell, Ga. • Southeast Bulloch HS

Wesley Britt turned down the offer to be a *Playboy* pre-season All-America, Smiley also was offered a spot, and he accepted the honor. He is also pre-season All-America by *College Football News* and rated the nation's number five guard by *The Sporting News*. Smiley was an honorable mention All-America and a second-team All-SEC last year. In 2001 he was Freshman All-SEC and Freshman All-America. Smiley has started every game since his redshirt freshman season. Last season, Smiley had 177 knockdown blocks, including a season-high 18 against Tennessee. He received the Sylvester Croom "Commitment to Excellence" award this spring.

38 Josh Smith

Running Back • Junior • 5-10, 210
Birmingham • Mountain Brook

Smith saw limited action last season, but is one of the stronger players on the team. A letterman in wrestling and track in high school, Josh is a versatile athlete. Although listed as a tailback, he could see playing time at fullback if needed. Most likely his value to Bama will be as a member of the scout team.

85 Kyle Tatum

Defensive Tackle • Sophomore • 6-7, 283
Prattville • Prattville HS

Tatum spent last season as a redshirt and used it effectively to gain strength. He can play either defensive tackle or end, but finished spring practice as number two at tackle. Tatum was considered by experts to be the top defensive line prospect in Alabama in his senior season when he earned prep All-America honors.

39 Lance Taylor

Wide Receiver • Senior • 5-9, 184
Mount Vernon • Citronelle HS

A walk-on wide receiver, Taylor played in every game last season, primarily on special teams. He has an outstanding work ethic and has great strength for a wide receiver. Lance is the son of former Tide running back James Taylor. In high school, he earned his team's academic award. He scored his only career touchdown last season at Oklahoma, when he recovered a punt blocked by Leslie Williams. He also blocked a kick against the Sooners.

1 Thurman Ward

Cornerback • Junior • 6-1, 183
Starkville, Miss. • Starkville HS

If anyone has switched positions more than Thurman Ward, then he has done some hard work. Every spring and fall it seems Ward changes from wide receiver to defensive back, or vice versa. A wide receiver last season, Ward caught one pass but was used on the reverse often. Ward worked at defensive back in the spring, a position he played in 2001. That season, he had one interception for 60 yards and a touchdown. He's listed number two at left cornerback going into fall practice. Ward is very athletic, as he played quarterback and defensive back in high school.

48 Leslie Williams

Defensive End • Senior • 6-5, 223
Stone Mountain, Ga. • Stone Mountain HS

Not many people have played wide receiver and defensive end in college, but Leslie Williams is one who has. He left Bama at one point, then returned. He has been unable to put on the weight of a conventional defensive end and doesn't have the speed to be a wide receiver. He saw action in every game last season, mainly on special teams, but his most memorable play was in the Oklahoma game, where his blocked punt was recovered by Lance Taylor for a touchdown.

21 Shaud Williams

Running Back • Senior • 5-8, 182
Andrews, Texas • Andrews HS

Alabama's leading rusher in 2002, his first at Bama, Williams rushed for 921 yards and 5 touchdowns, had 21 receptions for 228 yards, and 346 yards on punt returns. Williams had an 80-yard touchdown run against Arkansas on the opening play of the game. Williams set freshman rushing records at Texas Tech, but transferred after being moved to wide receiver as a sophomore. Williams' strength and dedication make up for his lack of size. He was drafted in the 13th round out of high school by the Atlanta Braves, and played baseball for a year at Texas Tech. He played baseball at Bama for part of the spring in 2003, but quit to focus on football.

16 Cornelius Wortham

Linebacker • Senior • 6-1, 241
Calhoun City, Miss. • Calhoun City HS

Wortham has been a starter for two years at linebacker, and finished second last season with 95 tackles. He had three tackles behind the line and one sack, five quarterback pressures, and two pass break-ups. He had 12 tackles against North Texas and Mississippi State and 10 against Georgia. He is perhaps the strongest linebacker on the team. He recorded a safety in his true freshman season, against Vanderbilt.

40 Michael Ziifle

Placekicker/Punter • Junior • 6-2, 254
Newnan, Ga. • Newnan HS

Ziifle started off the season last year as the placekicker, but lost the job. He also filled in for Lane Bearden as the Tide's punter for one game, and was the Tide's kickoff man for part of the season. While Ziifle has a very strong leg, he struggles with accuracy and consistency. A former soccer player, the walk-on could contribute in any number of ways for the Tide this season if he returns.

2003 Alabama Signees

By Drew Champlin

Last year's senior class of Alabama football players went through a lot in its four years. From an SEC Championship in 1999 to the cellar of the SEC in 2000 and followed by NCAA sanctions that resulted in probation and no post-season appearance in 2002. Even with the problems, the seniors ended with a bang, finishing 10-3 in 2002, the SEC West's best record, and finished the season with a trip to Hawaii.

This year's signing class is on pace to exceed the bizarre time of the 2002 seniors. But no more than 18 will make the journey, the result of NCAA sanctions limiting Bama signing classes.

Most of this year's recruiting class was recruited by Dennis Franchione, signed by Mike Price, and will play for Mike Shula. Franchione's staff made it a point to round up early commitments, and most of those committed to Bama stuck with the Tide even after Franchione bolted for Texas A&M last December.

That left the prospects in limbo. Some decided to look elsewhere but most remained firm to their commitments.

"Doors came open, coaches called and said 'Are you sure?'" signee Eric Gray said. "But I prayed about it and I felt comfortable. This is where I gave my word to play."

Mike Price then came onto the scene, coming from Washington State and taking over for Franchione 13 days later. He was able to fill out the class needs, and 18 players signed letters of intent to play for the Tide. Little did these recruits know that the chaos was just beginning.

After allegations of improper behavior stemming from an April trip to Pensacola, University of Alabama President Robert Witt fired Price on May 3, leaving the signees–who had not even graduated from high school yet–with more questions.

"It was something I wasn't expecting," Gray said. "But I felt like The University knew what it was doing."

Less than a week later, Mike Shula was brought on board. Thankfully for him, the recruits had signed letters of intent. But he still had to contact all of his signees and let them know, from the head coach, what the situation was.

"I talked to him, and he seems like a real nice guy," signee Demarcus Waldrop said. "He's real straightforward and honest."

Waldrop was another signee who never wanted to dishonor his commitment to the Tide, even when he wasn't sure who the head coach was going to be.

"I just want to play football," Waldrop said. "It doesn't matter who the coach is. The coach isn't going to play for you; you're going to play for the coach."

"I knew everything was going to be all right," Gray said. "Alabama football will remain Alabama football."

One signee will not be reporting. Quarterback Cliff Davis of Europa, Mississippi, was drafted by Major League Baseball this year and elected to play professional baseball rather than college football.

Alabama is allowed to bring in 18 new players this August. Bama actually signed 20, but will lose Davis to baseball and probably at least two others to academics. After initially signing only 18, the Shula staff added a couple of others this summer.

If Alabama still comes up short of 18 the Tide can backfill the spot (or spots) with a December graduate from junior college or high school or with a transfer.

Here is a look at the newest members of the Alabama Crimson Tide football team:

Matt Caddell

Wide Receiver • 5-11, 172 • McCalla • McAdory HS

Caddell was one of the top three prep receivers in Alabama and easily the state's top kick and punt return prospect. He tied the state and national record with 12 punt returns for touchdowns in his high school career. Caddell was the star of his high school team, catching 14 passes for 328 yards and rushing for 828 yards and eight touchdowns. He also had three interceptions from the free safety position and returned four punts for touchdowns. "A bunch of coaches have talked to me about returning kicks," Caddell said, following his official visit to Alabama. Caddell has excellent hands and the ability to make tacklers miss. Caddell was a member of the National Honor Society. Caddell is a likely candidate to redshirt this season with five senior receivers ahead of him, but could see action as a kick or punt returner.

Chris Capps

Offensive Lineman • 6-6, 260 • Fairburn, Ga. • Landmark Christian HS

Alabama was looking for another offensive lineman to sign in the later part of the recruiting period, and picked up a commitment from Capps shortly before signing date. Capps has the frame to be a successful offensive lineman at the college level, but will likely redshirt this year to gain strength and some more weight. Capps grew up an Alabama fan, and his mother is originally from Northport. He has many relatives in the Tuscaloosa area. Capps originally committed to Oklahoma State, but changed his mind when the staff under Mike Price offered him a scholarship. (The Franchione staff had not offered him.) Capps is a very good student.

Tim Castille

Running Back • 5-11, 220 • Birmingham • Briarwood Christian HS

The son of former Alabama and NFL defensive back Jeremiah

Castille, Tim enters The University with incredible credentials. He has been a key player for the Lions since his eighth grade year, when he returned a punt for a touchdown in the 5A championship game. That year he caught 65 passes for 1,194 yards-as an eighth grader against high school kids. Castille eventually moved to running back and was rated as the state's top running back prospect. Although he played the 2002 season with a strained knee, Castille still rushed for 875 yards and nine touchdowns. For his career, Castille amassed 243 receptions for 4,122 yards and 41 touchdowns. He had 163 career touchdowns. His father is the president of the Fellowship of Christian Athletes at The University, and younger brother Simeon is a top defensive back prospect this year. Castille is expected to redshirt.

D.J. Chambers

Wide Receiver • 5-11, 180 • Highland Home • Highland Home HS

Chambers will either play wide receiver or defensive back at The Capstone, but is expected to start as a wide receiver. He didn't have the accolades of Chad Jackson (Florida), Jayson Swain (Tennessee), or Matt Caddell (Alabama), but Chambers is an exceptional athlete, as he rushed for 711 yards, had 389 yards receiving, and was named 2A Back of the Year. On defense, he had six interceptions, returning two for touchdowns. He also starred in baseball, but isn't expected to play baseball at Alabama. Chambers played running back, quarterback, wide receiver, defensive back and returned punts and kickoffs his junior season. During that campaign, he accounted for 33 touchdowns. He had some work to do on the academic side to qualify. Chambers will likely redshirt this season.

Chris Felder

Defensive Back • 5-11, 170 • Camden • Wilcox Central HS

Felder is an outstanding defensive back prospect but may have problems qualifying and could start his career in junior college. Chris is the nephew of former Tide defensive back Shannon Felder, his prep coach. Chris transferred from Thomasville to Wilcox Central to play under his uncle. He also played with current Tide signee Eric Packer. Felder played both offense and defense in high school, but will likely play cornerback. As quarterback, he passed for 990 yards and 15 touchdowns, while rushing for 776 yards and six touchdowns. On defense, he had 36 tackles, four interceptions and one fumble recovery, which he returned for a touchdown. If Felder qualifies he will likely redshirt.

Wallace Gilberry

Defensive End • 6-3, 240 • Bay Minette • Baldwin County HS

Gilberry was one of the two summer signees by the Mike Shula staff. Although Gilberry had an outstanding senior season and even though he was academically eligible, he did not have any major college football scholarship offers until after the Alabama-Mississippi All-Star Game in June. Gilberry was the dominant defensive player in that game with six tackles and two sacks, including one sack late in the game that preserved the Alabama victory. After that game he received offers from Auburn and Southern Miss and an offer from Miami if he would wait until January. But when Alabama offered, Gilberry elected to sign with his favorite school. He was a tight end until his senior year. As a senior he had 61 solo tackles, 16 assists, seven sacks, seven tackles for losses, six deflected passes, two fumbles caused, and two fumbles recovered.

Eric Gray

Defensive Back • 5-11, 180 • Trinity • West Morgan HS

Eric was considered the top cornerback in Alabama's high schools last fall. Gray played running back and cornerback in high school, but will play cornerback in college. His senior season, Eric had 1,965 yards and 21 touchdowns on 160 carries. On defense, he had 30 tackles and four interceptions while helping West Morgan to an 11-1 record. Gray attended the NIKE Camp at Tuscaloosa last summer and was very impressive against a group of all-star receivers. He committed early to Alabama and held firm. He is expected to be redshirted.

Eric Johnson

Safety • 6-2, 201 • Anniston • Saks HS

Another of Bama's summer signees by Coach Mike Shula, Johnson was highly-regarded as a player but was not expected to be academically eligible. When he earned his eligibility this summer, Alabama was quick to offer and Johnson was quick to accept, picking the Tide over Auburn and Arkansas. He was a quarterback and safety in high school, but earned most of his reputation on defense. He also had a little time at wide receiver and tailback. At quarterback he rushed for 729 yards and passed for over 900 yards. On defense he had 132 tackles. He has been timed at 11.2 in the 100 meters and finished fourth in the state, and ran the anchor leg on Saks' state champion 4x100 and 4x400 relay teams. He also played basketball. His brother, Quentin Caver, was an All-SEC linebacker at Arkansas who now plays for the Kansas City Chiefs in the NFL.

Terrence Jones

Linebacker • 6-0, 199 • Northport • Tuscaloosa County HS

Jones is slightly undersized for the linebacker position, but he was an extremely productive player for one of the state's top schools in Tuscaloosa County High School. He was a teammate of current Tide signee LeRon McClain. Terrance led the Wildcats in tackles three consecutive years and amassed over 300 career tackles. His senior season, Terrance contributed 117 tackles, seven sacks, and three fumble recoveries. He was an All-West Alabama and all-state selection as a junior and senior. His high school coach, Robert Higginbotham, is adament that Jones will be a productive college defender, but he will likely redshirt as a freshman.

Dominic Lee

Defensive Lineman • 6-2, 290 • Birmingham • Huffman HS

Lee is perhaps the top defensive prospect of the group, and could see playing time as a freshman. Lee was considered the state's top

defensive lineman, and won the 6A Lineman of the Year award. Lee committed to Alabama early and never wavered. Because of his name and because he dominated offensive linemen throughout his high school career, he was known as "The Dominator." His senior season he recorded 78 tackles, nine sacks, one caused fumble, one recovery, and one blocked kick. He was named a second-team *USA Today* All-America, a member of the Super All-State team and was All-South. Lee is an excellent student.

LéRon McClain

Fullback • 6-0, 242 • Northport • Tuscaloosa County

McClain was the top fullback prospect in the state last season and one of the top three prospects in the nation at his position. The worry with McClain is whether he would qualify academically. McClain could be a partial qualifier, but if he does qualify he could see action as a freshman. McClain was a teammate at Tuscaloosa County with Terrance Jones. McClain benefits from the coaching change since the Price offense did not use a fullback and the Shula offense will. McClain had 1,071 yards rushing and 15 touchdowns on 165 carries. He also had five receptions for 110 yards. He was a Super All-State selection. McClain also played linebacker, recording 86 tackles and three sacks and one interception. He started at both positions for three years, an impressive feat at a 6A powerhouse.

Justin Moon

Offensive Lineman • 6-6, 295 • Guntersville • Guntersville HS

Moon is a very good offensive line prospect who is expected to redshirt this season. He committed to the Tide early. The coach who helped keep his commitment secure, Bobby Connelly, is still around under Mike Shula. "I've talked to Coach Connelly a lot," Moon said. "He's a good coach." Moon is a powerful run blocker, who could project at either guard or tackle in college. Moon earned all-state first-team honors his senior season. As a junior, Moon was selected all-region while playing right tackle. He has quick feet, is a hard worker and he is very intelligent. He spent many hours improving his strength and speed at a specialty training center in Birmingham. Moon is a very good student.

Earnest Nance

Outside Linebacker • 6-2, 210 • Courtland • Courtland HS

Nance actually signed with the Tide last season, but a knee injury suffered during his senior season of high school kept him from enrolling. Rather than enroll and redshirt, Nance decided to wait a year so he will have five years in which to play four. He played running back and linebacker in high school, but will play linebacker at Alabama. He is fully recovered from the knee injury but will likely spend a year as a redshirt. He played in just five games his senior season, rushing for 827 yards and nine touchdowns before injuring his knee. Nance also had 84 tackles through those five games. He had 1,101 yards rushing and 121 tackles as a junior.

Eric Packer

Running Back • 5-9, 184 • Camden • Wilcox Central

Packer is an excellent all-around athlete who starred at Wilcox Central High School at running back, wide receiver, and defensive back. A teammate of current signee Chris Felder in his senior season, Packer is one of the Tide's most athletic signees. He has been timed at 4.32 in the 40-yard dash and recorded a vertical jump of 41 inches. In his senior season he rushed for 1,576 yards and eight touchdowns. He also had over 300 yards receiving and two touchdowns receiving. He could play either of the three positions at Alabama, but his high school coach says he may be a wide receiver. He would probably redshirt as a freshman. Packer's qualifying status is uncertain and it is possibile he could enroll as a partial qualifier or start his career in a junior college.

Tyrone Prothro

Cornerback/Athlete • 5-10, 175 • Heflin • Cleburne County HS

Prothro is an explosive athlete capable of playing a number of positions, but will likely end up at wide receiver or defensive back. He played cornerback and running back for Cleburne County and recorded 8,099 career all-purpose yards, good enough for third all-time in Alabama state history. He also scored 92 career touchdowns and is an excellent prospect as a punt or kick returner. Most experts project him as a classic "cover corner," capable of shutting down opposing receivers. A high school teammate of current Tider Todd Bates, Prothro will likely redshirt if he plays cornerback.

William Roach

Wide Receiver/Safety • 6-2, 195 • Killen • Brooks HS

Roach committed early to Alabama, remained firm in his commitment, and in the fall will join his brother, Freddie, who is a starting Bama linebacker. Roach is a great athlete and could play either safety or wide receiver, but will likely start his career on offense. Roach probably didn't get the attention he deserved with players such as Chad Jackson, Jayson Swain, and Matt Caddell being in the same class, but he is a solid prospect. Roach rushed for 973 yards and passed for 176 yards as a senior, accounting for 15 touchdowns on offense. On defense, he recorded 53 tackles and three interceptions. While Roach may start his career at wide receiver, it would not be a surprise to see him end up at safety because, like brother Freddie, Will is a hard hitter. Roach is a very good student. He will likely redshirt his first year, no matter what position he plays.

Keith Saunders

Defensive End • 6-4, 220 • Chatham, VA • Hargrave Military Academy

Saunders may have been a late signee, but this defensive end has a chance to contribute early. Sanders, who just turned 18 last December, spent last season at Hargrave Military Academy. The year at the prep school will not effect his eligibility, as he still has five years to play four. He will likely redshirt to add bulk and strength as Saunders has the frame to grow into a 6-5, 260-pound defensive end.

Saunders was impressed by Defensive Ends Coach Paul Randolph when the Tide was recruiting him. "Coach Randolph recruited me some while he was at West Virginia," Saunders said. "I chose Alabama partly due to him." As a high school senior, Saunders posted dominant numbers, recording 90 tackles and 12 sacks. Saunders played both tight end and defensive end in high school, but he played strictly tight end after attending Hargrave Military Academy. Last year, Saunders had seven receptions for around 200 yards and developed into a good blocker. However, Alabama signed him to play defensive end. "The tradition and atmosphere at Alabama made me feel like I was at home," Saunders said.

Demarcus Waldrop

Safety/Linebacker • 6-0, 195 • Pinson • Pinson Valley HS

Waldrop may be undersized for a linebacker, but is considered a devastating hard hitter. He played strong safety and linebacker in high school and while he may be small for a linebacker, that won't stop coaches from trying him there. "I talked to the coaches and they want me to come in and be a rover," Waldrop said. "I played rover and safety in high school." He liked the Tide throughout the recruiting process, and committed quickly once he received an offer. Waldrop was described by his high school coach as a sideline-to-sideline linebacker, capable of dictating the action during play. Waldrop started for four years at Pinson Valley, and recorded 157 tackles, 15 sacks, and two interceptions in his senior season. His junior year, he turned in 142 tackles, nine sacks, 14 stops behind the line and three interceptions to earn all-state honors. He was also a star on the track team, finishing third in the 100-meter dash at the 6A state meet. Waldrop will likely redshirt.

Travis West

Offensive Lineman • 6-4, 275 • Laurel, Miss. • Northeast Jones HS

West committed to the Tide early and held firm throughout all the coaching changes. He is a good offensive line prospect who will likely redshirt this season. He is an excellent run blocker and has the ability to develop into a solid pass blocker as well. Travis is a very intelligent offensive lineman, and was a three-year starter for NE Jones. West turned down scholarship offers from Ole Miss, Mississippi State, Southern Miss, West Virginia, and Marshall to join the Alabama Class of 2003, and according to his coach, Randy Martin, Alabama fans are going to be very happy with West. "He's a strong side tackle who pulls," Martin told TheInsiders.com last summer around the time of West's commitment. "He plays with a mean streak. He's pretty much everything you look for in an offensive lineman."

WANTED TO BUY

UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA FOOTBALL MEMORABILIA

Highest prices paid for your old programs, media guides, autographs, game used equipment, photos, newspaper clippings, jewelry, etc. I am a collector, not a dealer, so I don't have to mark up your memorabilia for re-sale. I can pay you the true value, not the wholesale price. If you have any of the items listed below and if you would like to sell, please contact me.

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1971 Florida
1970 VPI
1967 Vanderbilt
1965 Vanderbilt
1961 Tulane
1959 Houston, Memphis State
1958 Mississippi State, Memphis State, LSU
1957 Tulane
1954 Auburn
1952 LSU
1951 Mississippi Southern
1945 Keesler Air Base
1941 Mississippi State
1940 Mercer, Tennessee, Vanderbilt

Any Tennessee vs. Alabama Program from 1928-45

MEDIA GUIDES
1995 Season
1954 Season
1953 Season
1952 Season
1951 Season
1950 Season
1949 Season
1948 Season
1947 Season
1946 Season
1945 Season

BOWL MEDIA GUIDES
1943 Orange Bowl (Boston College)
1945 Sugar Bowl (Duke)
1946 Rose Bowl (Southern Cal)
1948 Sugar Bowl (Texas)
1953 Orange Bowl (Syracuse)
1954 Cotton Bowl (Rice)
1959 Liberty Bowl (Penn State)
1960 Bluebonnet Bowl (Texas)
1962 Sugar Bowl (Arkansas)
1963 Orange Bowl (Oklahoma)
1969 Liberty Bowl (Colorado)

2003 Alabama Roster

NO.	NAME, POS	CL	HT	WT	EXP	HOMETOWN
1	Thurman Ward, LCB	Jr	6-1	183	1L	Starkville, Miss.
1	Scoop McDowell, WR	Fr	6-1	176	HS	Jackson, Miss.
2	Antonio Carter, WR	Sr	5-9	188	3L	Tallahassee, Fla.
2	Darrell Owens, DB	So	5-9	185	Sq	Brantley
3	Dre Fulgham, WR	Sr	6-1	225	3L	Montevallo
3	Alex Fox, PK	Jr	5-9	178	Sq	Pensacola, Fla.
3	Ryan Wilbanks, DB	Fr	5-8	172	Sq	Grayson, Ga.
4	Matt Miller, WR	So	6-2	207	SQ	Rainbow City
5	Brandon Brooks, WR	So	5-4	162	SQ	Birmingham
5	Josh Woodard, PK	Fr	6-1	170	RS	Decatur
5	Danny Jordan, DB	Jr	6-0	197	Sq	Northport
6	Derrick Pope, MLB	Sr	6-0	223	1L	Galveston, Texas
8	Freddie Roach, MLB	So	6-2	251	1L	Killen
8	Gabe Giardina, PK	Sr	5-6	174	SQ	Charleston, W. Va.
8	Teo Clark, QB	Fr	6-2	197	SQ	Jasper
9	Anthony Madison, RCB	Jr	5-9	174	1L	Thomasville
9	Will Fountain, WR	Sr	6-1	193	SQ	Brewton
10	Carlos Andrews, SS	Jr	6-0	216	1L	Tallahassee, Fla.
11	Brandon Avalos, QB	Fr	6-0	175	RS	Tuscaloosa
11	Dennis DuBois, WR	Jr	5-9	173	RS	Colonia, N.J.
12	Brodie Croyle,QB	So	6-2	199	1L	Rainbow City
12	Jeff Aul, P	Fr	6-2	200	RS	Dadeville
13	Spencer Pennington, QB	So	6-4	223	SQ	Fayette
13	Bo Freeland, P	Jr	6-5	230	SQ	Eutaw
14	Brian Kilpatrick, SS	Fr	6-4	193	RS	Monroeville
15	Nic Luke, TB	Fr	6-1	214	RS	Phenix City
15	Sammy Autrey, SS	Fr	6-0	195	RS	Camden
15	Jeremy Schatz, P	So	6-9	155	SQ	Homewood
16	Cornelius Wortham, SLB	Sr	6-1	241	3L	Calhoun City Miss.
16	Kendrick Eaton, WR	Fr	5-6	144	RS	Camden
16	Derek DuBois, WR	Jr	5-8	165	TR	Colonia, N.J.
17	Ramzee Robinson, LCB	Fr	5-10	184	RS	Huntsville
17	Mike Machen, QB	Fr	6-6	230	HS	Mobile
18	Brooks Daniels, WLB	Sr	6-2	205	3L	Jasper, Fla.
18	Danny Barger, WR	Fr	5-11	167	SQ	Tuscaloosa
19	Roberto McBride, RCB	Sr	5-9	167	1L	Lakeland, Fla.
19	Josh Averett, WR	Jr	6-3	203	Sq	Vance
20	Charles Jones, S	Sr	6-0	183	2L	Waynesboro, Ga.
20	Justin Ballard, TB	So	5-10	183	TR	Eutaw
21	Shaud Williams, TB	Sr	5-8	182	1L	Andrews, Texas
21	Matt Grice, S	Jr	6-0	196	SQ	Tuscaloosa
22	Brian Bostick, PK	Jr	5-9	216	1L	Cullman
22	Ryan Babb, TB	Fr	6-0	198	RS	Phenix City
22	Ben Rose, LCB	Fr	5-9	170	SQ	Rochester Hills, Mich
23	David Scott, RCB	Sr	5-11	181	1L	Homestead, Fla.
23	Kyle Bennett, TB	Fr	6-2	219	RS	Boaz
25	Walter Smith, RCB	Fr	5-9	170	Sq	Bartow, Fla.
26	Charlie Peprah, LCB	So	5-11	198	1L	Plano, Texas
27	Ray Hudson, TB	Jr	5-11	203	2L	Bonifay, Fla.
28	Tyler Straate, PK	Fr	5-8	177	HS	Pleasant Grove
29	Corey Harris, FS	Fr	5-10	185	SQ	Tuscaloosa
31	Greg McLain, FB	So	6-2	246	1L	Lineville
32	Chris James, S	Jr	6-0	195	2L	Albany, Ga.
33	Kenneth Darby, TB	Fr	5-11	202	RS	Huntsville
34	Charles Hosea, RCB	Jr	5-10	181	SQ	Huntsville
35	DeMeco Ryans, SLB	So	6-1	226	1L	Bessemer
36	David Steakley, WR	So	5-10	173	SQ	Huntsville
37	William Yates, DE	Fr	5-10	225	HS	Tuscaloosa
38	Josh Smith, TB	Jr	5-10	210	SQ	Birmingham
38	Corbin Pardue, SS	So	5-10	195	SQ	Houston, Texas
39	Lance Taylor, WR	Sr	5-9	184	2L	Mount Vernon
39	Will Hardy, SLB	So	6-3	224	SQ	Wetumpka
40	Michael Ziifle, PK/P	Jr	6-2	254	1L	Newnan, Ga.
40	Josh Taylor, DB	Fr	5-11	194	SQ	Calvert
41	Roman Harper, SS	So	6-0	186	1L	Prattville
41	Shawn Johnson, WR	Fr	5-9	169	SQ	Mobile
42	Juwan Garth, WLB	Fr	6-3	204	RS	Decatur
43	Kyle Robinson, PK	Sr	5-10	181	1L	Cleburne, Texas
44	Ted Gryska, TE	Jr	6-5	242	SQ	Northport
44	Joey Bearden, P	Fr	6-0	189	SQ	Helena
45	Juke King, SLB	So	6-0	232	SQ	Theodore
46	Mike McLaughlin, PK	So	6-2	207	SQ	Gautier, Miss.
46	Allen Long, SLB	Fr	6-1	254	SQ	Addison
47	Mark Anderson, RDE	So	6-6	230	1L	Tulsa, Okla.
48	Leslie Williams, LDE	Sr	6-5	223	1L	Stone Mtn, Ga.
49	Nathan Cox, FB	Jr	6-0	228	SQ	Spanish Fort
49	P.J. Fletcher, DE	Jr	6-2	231	SQ	Panama City, Fla.
50	Nick Ridings, SN	Sr	6-0	246	3L	Marietta, Ga.
50	Matt McMullin, SLB	So	6-2	230	SQ	Montgomery
51	Evan Mathis, RT	Jr	6-5	294	2L	Homewood
51	King Gladney, MLB	So	6-0	230	SQ	Bossier City, La.
52	Taylor Britt, LDT	So	6-4	279	Sq	Cullman
53	Brandon Dean, MLB	Jr	6-1	232	SQ	Mobile
53	Mitch Grissett, SN	Jr	6-0	214	SQ	Red Level
56	Todd Bates, LDE	Jr	6-4	252	2L	Heflin
57	David Simmons, WLB	Jr	5-10	195	SQ	Geneva
60	Von Ewing, RT	So	6-4	312	SQ	Troy
62	Cody Grammer, C	Fr	6-3	268	RS	Tuscaloosa
63	Mark Sanders, RG	So	6-6	320	SQ	Ashville
66	Andy Harrison, RG	Fr	6-1	275	RS	Trussville
67	David Sears, SN	So	6-4	241	SQ	Vestavia
69	Matt Lomax, C	Sr	6-3	295	SQ	Mobile

NO. NAME, POS	CL	HT	WT	EXP	HOMETOWN
70 Wesley Britt, LT	Jr	6-8	315	2L	Cullman
73 Dennis Alexander, RG	Sr	6-6	345	3L	Memphis, Tenn.
74 J.B. Closner, C	So	6-4	280	SQ	San Antonio, Texas
75 Atlas Herrion, LT	Sr	6-4	304	1L	Daphne
77 Gerritt Gordon, DT	Jr	6-2	270	TR	Mobile
78 Justin Smiley, LG	Jr	6-4	301	2L	Ellabell, Ga.
79 Danny Martz, LG	Jr	6-4	294	SQ	Gaithersburg, Md.
79 J.P. Adams, RDT	Fr	6-3	261	RS	Northport
80 Zach Fletcher, WR	Sr	6-4	187	1L	Moulton
81 Brandon Greer, WR	Sr	6-0	196	2L	Rainbow City
82 Marcus McKnight, WR	Fr	6-2	183	RS	Callahan, Fla.
83 William Hold, WR	Fr	6-1	190	RS	Austin, Texas
84 Triandos Luke, WR	Sr	6-0	190	3L	Phenix City
85 Kyle Tatum, LDT	Fr	6-7	283	SQ	Prattville
85 Tarry Givens, WR	Jr	6-5	230	SQ	Tallahassee, Fla.
86 John Bevel, RDT	Sr	6-0	289	SQ	Birmingham
86 Matt Ragland, WR	So	5-10	191	SQ	Huntsville
87 Jason Bolding, WR	Jr	6-4	205	Sq	Simi Valley, Calif.
88 Clint Johnston, TE	So	6-4	248	1L	Wetumpka
89 Kyle Dyer, TE	So	6-3	205	SQ	Montgomery
90 N. McKay-Lscher, LDE	Sr	6-4	255	2L	Toronto, Can.
91 Chris Harris, RDE	Fr	6-6	239	RS	Tuscaloosa
92 David Cavan, TE	Jr	6-4	259	1L	Tuscaloosa
93 Donald Clarke, TE	Sr	6-4	264	1L	Boca Raton, Fla.
93 Jon Brunson, RDE	Jr	6-3	248	SQ	Hartford
94 Rusty Hill, TE	Fr	6-1	226	Sq	Hokes Bluff
94 Adam Bass, DE	So	6-0	243	SQ	Atlanta
95 Ahmad Childress, RDT	Jr	6-5	358	1L	Nashville, Tenn.
97 Anthony Bryant, LDT	Sr	6-3	348	2L	Newbern
98 Antwan Odom, RDE	Jr	6-5	273	2L	Bayou LaBatre
99 Jeremy Clark, RDT	Fr	6-2	287	RS	Daphne

2003 Alabama Football Signees And Expected Walk-Ons

Name	Pos	Ht	Wt	Hometown/High School
*Andrew Bone	WR	5-11	175	Rainbow City/Westbrook
Matt Caddell	WR	5-11	170	McCalla/McAdory
Chris Capps	OL	6-6	270	Fairburn, Ga./Landmark
Tim Castille	RB	5-11	220	Birmingham/Briarwood
D.J. Chambers	WR	6-0	180	Highland Home
*Matt Collins	DE/LB	6-2	235	Pinson/Clay-Chalkville
*Will Denniston	DE	6-3	225	Mobile/UMS Wright
*Patrick Eades	P	6-1	185	Hoover
*Barrett Earnest	TE	6-1	225	Loretto, Tenn.
Chris Felder	CB	5-11	165	Camden/Wilcox Central
Wallace Gilberry	DE	6-3	240	Bay Minette/Baldwin County
Eric Gray	CB	5-11	190	Trinity/West Morgan
Eric Johnson	S	6-2	201	Anniston/Saks
*Justin Johnson	DE	6-3	260	Tuscaloosa/Central
Terrence Jones	LB	6-1	205	Northport/Tuscaloosa County
Dominic Lee	DT	6-4	295	Birmingham/Huffman
LéRon McClain	FB	6-2	241	Northport/Tuscaloosa County
Justin Moon	OL	6-6	290	Guntersville
Earnest Nance	LB	6-3	210	Courtland
Eric Packer	RB	5-9	184	Camden/Wilcox-Central
Tyrone Prothro	CB	5-10	170	Heflin/Cleburne County
William Roach	WR/S	6-1	190	Killen/Brooks
Keith Saunders	DE	6-4	220	Chatham, Va./Hargrove Miliatry
Demarcus Waldrop	SS	6-0	195	Pinson/Pinson Valley
Travis West	OL/C	6-4	275	Laurel, Miss./Northeast Jones

*Expected to walk on

2003 SEC SCHEDULES

ALABAMA

Aug. 30	South Florida @ Birmingham
Sept. 6	Oklahoma
Sept. 13	Kentucky
Sept. 20	Northern Illinois
Sept. 27	Arkansas
Oct. 4	@ Georgia
Oct. 11	Southern Miss
Oct. 18	@ Mississippi
Oct. 25	Tennessee
Nov. 8	@ Mississippi State
Nov. 15	LSU
Nov. 22	@ Auburn
Nov. 29	@ Hawaii

ARKANSAS

Sept. 6	Tulsa
Sept. 13	@ Texas
Sept. 20	North Texas @ Little Rock
Sept. 27	**@ ALABAMA**
Oct. 11	Auburn
Oct. 18	Florida
Oct. 25	@ Mississippi
Nov. 1	@ Kentucky
Nov. 8	South Carolina @ Little Rock
Nov. 15	New Mexico State
Nov. 22	Mississippi State
Nov. 29	@ LSU

AUBURN

Aug. 30	Southern Cal
Sept. 6	@ Georgia Tech
Sept. 13	@ Vanderbilt
Sept. 27	Western Kentucky
Oct. 4	Tennessee
Oct. 11	@ Arkansas
Oct. 18	Mississippi State
Oct. 25	@ LSU
Nov. 1	Louisiana-Monroe
Nov. 8	Mississippi
Nov. 15	@ Georgia
Nov. 22	**ALABAMA**

FLORIDA

Aug. 30	San Jose State
Sept. 6	@ Miami (Fla.)
Sept. 13	Florida A&M 6 p.m.
Sept. 20	Tennessee
Sept. 27	@ Kentucky
Oct. 4	Mississippi
Oct. 11	@ LSU
Oct. 18	@ Arkansas
Nov. 1	*vs. Georgia @ Jacksonville
Nov. 8	Vanderbilt
Nov. 15	@ South Carolina
Nov. 29	Florida State

GEORGIA

Aug. 30	@ Clemson
Sept. 6	Middle Tennessee
Sept. 13	South Carolina
Sept. 20	LSU
Sept. 27	**Open**
Oct. 4	**ALABAMA**
Oct. 11	@ Tennessee
Oct. 18	@ Vanderbilt
Oct. 25	UAB
Nov. 1	Florida @ Jacksonville
Nov. 15	Auburn
Nov. 22	Kentucky
Nov. 29	@ Georgia Tech

KENTUCKY

Aug. 30	Louisville
Sept. 6	Murray State
Sept. 13	**@ ALABAMA**
Sept. 20	@ Indiana
Sept. 27	Florida
Oct. 11	@ South Carolina
Oct. 18	Ohio University
Oct. 25	Mississippi State
Nov. 1	Arkansas
Nov. 15	@ Vanderbilt
Nov. 22	@ Georgia
Nov. 29	Tennessee

LSU

Aug. 30	Louisiana-Monroe
Sept. 6	@ Arizona
Sept. 13	Marshall
Sept. 20	Georgia
Sept. 27	@ Mississippi State
Oct. 11	Florida
Oct. 18	@ South Carolina
Oct. 25	Auburn
Nov. 1	Louisiana Tech
Nov. 8	**Open**
Nov. 15	**@ ALABAMA**
Nov. 22	@ Mississippi
Nov. 29	Arkansas

MISSISSIPPI

Aug. 30	@ Vanderbilt
Sept. 6	@ Memphis
Sept. 13	Louisiana-Monroe
Sept. 27	Texas Tech
Oct. 4	@ Florida
Oct. 11	Arkansas State
Oct. 18	**ALABAMA**
Oct. 25	Arkansas
Nov. 1	South Carolina
Nov. 8	@ Auburn
Nov. 22	LSU
Nov. 27	@ Mississippi State

MISSISSIPPI STATE

Aug. 30	Oregon
Sept. 13	@ Tulane
Sept. 20	@ Houston
Sept. 27	LSU
Oct. 4	Vanderbilt
Oct. 11	Memphis
Oct. 18	@ Auburn
Oct. 25	@ Kentucky
Nov. 1	**Open**
Nov. 8	**ALABAMA**
Nov. 15	@ Tennessee
Nov. 22	@ Arkansas
Nov. 27	Mississippi

SOUTH CAROLINA

Aug. 30	Louisiana-Lafayette
Sept. 6	Virginia
Sept. 13	@ Georgia
Sept. 20	Alabama-Birmingham
Sept. 27	@ Tennessee
Oct. 11	Kentucky
Oct. 18	LSU
Oct. 25	Vanderbilt
Nov. 1	@ Mississippi
Nov. 8	Arkansas @ Little Rock
Nov. 15	Florida
Nov. 22	Clemson

TENNESSEE

Aug. 30	Fresno State
Sept. 6	Marshall
Sept. 20	@ Florida
Sept. 27	South Carolina
Oct. 4	@ Auburn
Oct. 11	Georgia
Oct. 18	**Open**
Oct. 25	**@ ALABAMA**
Nov. 1	Duke
Nov. 8	@ Miami
Nov. 15	Mississippi State
Nov. 22	Vanderbilt
Nov. 29	@ Kentucky

VANDERBILT

Aug. 30	Mississippi
Sept. 6	Tennessee-Chattanooga
Sept. 13	Auburn
Sept. 20	at Texas Christian
Sept. 27	Georgia Tech
Oct. 4	@ Mississippi State
Oct. 11	Navy
Oct. 18	Georgia
Oct. 25	@ South Carolina
Nov. 8	@ Florida
Nov. 15	KENTUCKY
Nov. 22	@ Tennessee

Saturday, August 30
Legion Field
Birmingham

GAME ONE: SOUTH FLORIDA

Coach Jim Leavitt

Location: Tampa, Fla.
Nickname: Bulls
Colors: Green and Gold
Conference: Conference USA
Stadium: Raymond James Stadium (65,657)
2002 Record: 9-2 (not conference-affiliated in 2002)
All-Time Record vs. Alabama: 0-0
Head Coach: Jim Leavitt (Missouri '74)
Career Record: 44-22, six years
Record at South Florida: 44-22, six years
Starters returning: 12
Offense (5): LT Derrick Sarosi, LG Shelly Houston, C Alex Herron, RG Chris Carothers, RT Levi Newton
Defense (6): DE Terrance Royal, OLB Maurice Jones, OLB Courtney Davenport, CB Ron Hemingway, S Kevin Verpaele, S J.R. Reed
Specialists (1): PK Santiago Grammatica

2002 Results

August 29	South Florida 52 Florida Atlantic 10
September 7	South Florida 37 Northern Illinois 6
September 14	Arkansas 42 South Florida 3
September 28	Oklahoma 31 South Florida 14
October 5	South Florida 24 North Texas 17
October 12	South Florida 16 Southern Mississippi 13
October 19	South Florida 46 East Carolina 30
November 2	South Florida 56 Charleston Southern 6
November 9	South Florida 31 Memphis 28
November 16	South Florida 29 Bowling Green 7
November 23	South Florida 32 Houston 14

2003 Schedule

August 30	at Alabama (Birmingham)
September 6	Nicholls State
September 27	at Army
October 4	Louisville
October 10	TCU
October 25	at Southern Miss
November 1	Cincinnati
November 8	at East Carolina
November 22	Alabama-Birmingham
November 29	at Memphis

South Florida Head Coach Jim Leavitt was a candidate for Alabama's job opening, but it eventually went to Mike Price. Price was set to bring in a wide-open offense, but while Mike Shula moves Alabama towards a pro-set offense, Leavitt continues to direct a three- and four-wide attack that most resembles the run-and-shoot.

And the Bulls will do it with talent unbecoming of a school playing only its second year of Division-IA college football. USF went 4-0 against Conference USA opponents in 2002, as well as spanking a strong Bowling Green team and a tough Northern Illinois squad. South Florida's only two losses came in back-to-back weeks on the road against Arkansas and Oklahoma.

Fortunately for Alabama, quarterback Marquel Blackwell is gone. Blackwell accounted for 2,590 yards on 230-of-403 (57.1 per cent) passing in 2002. Blackwell was also the team's third-leading rusher, accounting for 302 yards and five touchdowns on 89 carries.

Most likely to replace him is junior Ronnie Banks, who is more a pure pocket passer. Freshman Jean Julmiste and sophomore David Mullins are also in the mix.

While Blackwell operated in a full-time four-wide attack, USF coaches are toning things down a bit. Expect the use of more tight ends and fullbacks this year, although the Bulls will maintain at least a three-wide posture whenever possible.

Banks will be distributing passes to a talented, but lightly-experienced, group. No starting wide receivers return. But Huey Whittaker (26 catches, 383 yards) and Chris Iskra (26 catches, 345 yards) have experience. Darren Haliburton, Florida transfer Elgin Hicks, and Brian Fisher are other candidates.

Running the ball may be done by committee until someone separates from the group. DeJuan Green, a name familiar to Tide fans who follow Sunshine State recruiting, is an early favorite, although junior Clenton Crossley will also get his share of carries. Quentin Callum and Billy Henderson also carried the ball for South Florida in 2002, but only Henderson and Crossley averaged more than four yards per carry. This is definitely a team that sets up the run with the pass.

All five offensive line starters return. Tackle Derrick Sarosi and guard Chris Carothers are the class of the group, although tackle Levi Newton, center Alex Herron and guard Shelly Houston are promising as well.

Defensively, USF must find a way to replace linebacker Kawika Mitchell, now plying his trade in the NFL. Devon Davis and Vincent Capogna are the early contenders to fill Mitchell's middle linebacker slot. Maurice Jones and Courtney Davenport return as starters on the outside in USF's 4-3 defensive scheme.

But while the linebacking corps is experienced, the defensive line is not. Only one starter (end Terrence Royal) returns. For the remaining spots, nose tackle Lee Roy Selmon, Jr., is flanked by tackle Cedric Battles and end Tim Jones. Kenny Huebner is a do-everything backup. (Selmon is the son of the former Oklahoma great who is now the South Florida athletics director.)

Three starters in the secondary return, but the defensive backfield was the weak link of last year's defense. Nevertheless, three senior starters (cornerback Ron Hemingway, safeties Kevin Verpaele and J.R. Reed) anchor a group that is deep and experienced. Antonio Warren and D'Juan Brown are battling for the vacant cornerback slot.

South Florida has nothing to worry about when it comes time to kick a field goal. The latest in a long line of Grammatica brothers, Santiago, was the nation's 17th-ranked placekicker last year. Punting is a different story; Brandon Baker averaged 29.0 yards on his only two punts in 2002.

This game has been selected for ESPN telecast with kickoff set for 2 p.m. CDT.

–Jess Nicholas

Saturday, September 6
Bryant-Denny
Tuscaloosa

GAME TWO: OKLAHOMA

Coach Bob Stoops

Location: Norman, Okla.
Nickname: Sooners
Colors: Crimson and Cream
Conference: Big 12 South
Stadium: Oklahoma Memorial Stadium, Owen Field
2002 Record: 12-2 (6-2 Big-12)
All-Time Record vs. Alabama: 1-1-1
Head Coach: Bob Stoops (Iowa, '83)
Career Record: 43-9, 4 years
Record at Oklahoma: 43-9, 4 years
Starters Returning: 16
Offense (4): WR Will Peoples, C Vince Carter, LT Wes Sims, RT Jammal Brown
Defense (10): DE Jonathan Jackson, DT Kory Klein, NT Tommie Harris, OLB Teddy Lehman, MLB Lance Mitchell, OLB Pasha Jackson, CB Derrick Strait, CB Antonio Perkins
Specialists (2): PK Trey DiCarlo, P Blake Ferguson

2002 Results

August 30	Oklahoma 37 Tulsa 30
September 7	Oklahoma 37 Alabama 27
September 14	Oklahoma 68 UTEP 0
September 28	Oklahoma 31 South Florida 14
October 5	Oklahoma 31 Missouri 24
October 12	Oklahoma 35 Texas 24
October 19	Oklahoma 49 Iowa State 3
November 2	Oklahoma 27 Colorado 11
November 9	Texas A&M 30 Oklahoma 26
November 16	Oklahoma 49 Baylor 9
November 23	Oklahoma 60 Texas Tech 15
November 30	Oklahoma State 38 Oklahoma 28
December 7	Oklahoma 29 Colorado 7 (Big 12 Championship)
January 1	Oklahoma 34 Washington State 14 (Rose Bowl)

2003 Schedule

August 30	North Texas
September 6	at Alabama
September 13	Fresno State
September 20	UCLA
October 4	at Iowa State
October 11	Texas
October 18	Missouri
October 25	at Colorado
November 1	Oklahoma State
November 8	Texas A&M
November 15	Baylor
November 22	at Texas Tech

In his second game as a head coach, Mike Shula will be facing perhaps the number one team in the country. The 2003 Oklahoma Sooners could be stronger than the 2002 edition. Oklahoma has some holes on offense, but a defense that was stifling in 2002 returns an eye-popping 10 starters.

Oklahoma's defensive line is headed up by nose tackle Tommie Harris. But while Harris gets most of the press, tackle Kory Klein and end Jonathan Jackson cause most of the headaches. Junior Dan Cody slips into the only open slot along Oklahoma's line, but he has enough experience to be considered a returning starter.

At linebacker, Oklahoma resembles a start-up NFL franchise. The Sooners return three starters, all seniors, and all good. Teddy Lehman, Lance Mitchell and Pasha Jackson are at the top of nearly everyone's list of elite linebacking corps for 2003. The trio is equally adept at rushing the passer and containing the run.

All four starters in the secondary return as well, although junior college transfer Donte Nicholson has a chance of supplanting a returning starter at safety. If Nicholson comes off the bench, he'll back up both Eric Bassey and Antonio Perkins. Cornerbacks Derrick Strait and Brandon Everage have lockdown capability, while Mark Bradley is a capable reserve.

The offense is not as far along. Yet.

Quarterback Nate Hybl–not flashy, but maddeningly effective–is gone, leaving the talented but oft-injured Jason White in his place. White was the starting quarterback against Alabama last year before suffering a season-ending knee injury early in the contest. Sophomore Brent Rawls is pushing White, however, and Oklahoma could end up employing a quarterback-by-committee system until one separates.

Running back Quentin Griffin took his 1,740 rushing yards, 259 receiving yards and 17 offensive touchdowns to the NFL, but the cupboard is far from bare. Kejuan Jones, thought by many to be a better prospect than Griffin, and Tide-killer Renaldo Works return. When Oklahoma chooses to employ a fullback, J.D. Runnels is the man. But more often than not, Oklahoma will present a three-wide attack.

It is here Oklahoma suffers from a lack of experience. Will Peoples is the only wide receiver returning who has starting experience. Mark Clayton is a formidable talent, but caught just one pass in 2002. Brandon Jones, Ataleo Ford and Travis Wilson join Jejuan Rankins as candidates for the other starting position. Lance Donley assumes Trent Smith's tight end position, while Willie Roberts and James Moses back him up. It may take a while for the playing rotation to shake out, but there is talent.

An offensive key is how well Davin Joseph and Kelvin Chiasson grow into their roles as new starters on the line. Center Vince Carter and tackles Jammal Brown and Wes Sims are back for another year. Depth is a concern.

The specialists are experienced, but punter Blake Ferguson was erratic. Kicker Trey DiCarlo played well.

Of the 13 NCAA team statistical categories, Oklahoma placed in the top ten in five of them in 2002. The Sooners were fifth in scoring offense, sixth in scoring defense, seventh in turnover margin and ninth in both pass efficiency defense and punt returns. Names of Sooner players dotted the individual category leaders' list, as well.

This game has been selected for ESPN telecast with kickoff set for 6:45 p.m. CDT.

–Jess Nicholas

Saturday, September 13 Bryant-Denny Tuscaloosa

GAME THREE: KENTUCKY

Coach Rich Brooks

Location: Lexington, Ky.
Nickname: Wildcats
Colors: Blue and White
Conference: SEC East
Stadium: Commonwealth Stadium (67,530)
2002 Record: 7-5 (3-5 SEC)
All-Time Record vs. Alabama: 2-31-1
Head Coach: Rich Brooks (Oregon State '63)
Career Record: 91-109-4, 18 years
Record at Kentucky: 0-0, first season
Starters Returning: 12
Offense (7): QB Jared Lorenzen, WR Derek Abney, WR Tommy Cook, LT Matt Huff, LG Jason Rollins, C Nick Seitze, RT Antonio Hall
Defense (4): DE Jeremy Caudill, DE Vincent Burns, CB Leonard Burress, S Mike Williams
Specialists (1): PK Taylor Begley

2002 Results

September 1	Kentucky 22 Louisville 17
September 7	Kentucky 77 UTEP 17
September 14	Kentucky 27 Indiana 17
September 21	Kentucky 44 Middle Tennessee 22
September 28	Florida 41 Kentucky 34
October 12	South Carolina 16 Kentucky 12
October 19	Kentucky 29 Arkansas 17
October 26	Georgia 52 Kentucky 24
November 2	Kentucky 45 Mississippi State 24
November 9	LSU 33 Kentucky 30
November 16	Kentucky 41 Vanderbilt 21
November 30	Tennessee 24 Kentucky 0

2003 Schedule

August 31	Louisville
September 6	Murray State
September 13	at Alabama
September 20	at Indiana
September 27	Florida
October 11	at South Carolina
October 18	Ohio
October 25	Mississippi State
November 1	Arkansas
November 15	at Vanderbilt
November 22	at Georgia
November 29	Tennessee

Kentucky football in 2002 was what a good tragedy is to the theatre. The team made great strides and played itself into bowl eligibility, only to sit home for the holidays due to NCAA sanctions. Now those sanctions are over, and Kentucky fans are chomping at the bit to start another bowl run. But Kentucky's defense, decimated by graduation and the NFL draft, may not cooperate.

Offensively, things are changing as well. Last year's coach, Guy Morriss, left Kentucky for Baylor. The Wildcats turned to former Oregon coach Rich Brooks. Brooks brings with him a wealth of experience in the college and pro games, and he brings something else that has been foreign to Kentucky fans over the last decade–a fullback.

How well Kentucky's revamped offensive philosophy works remains to be seen, but the Cats have talent. It starts with left tackle-sized quarterback Jared Lorenzen, who threw for 24 touchdowns against only five interceptions in 2002. Lorenzen has lost some weight since 2002 but still carries more than 270 pounds on his 6-4 frame. The result is a quarterback who has trouble working outside the pocket. Brooks plans to play mobile Shane Boyd as well.

Lorenzen will have talented wide receivers in Tommy Cook and Derek Abney, the latter a special teams superstar. Aaron Boone has departed, leaving Glenn Holt, Gerad Parker and Chris Bernard to provide depth. Boyd might play here as well. Senior Win Gaffron and sophomore Jeremiah Drobney are competing with junior college transfer Kurt Jackson at tight end.

Surprisingly, Kentucky was ranked higher in rushing offense (57) than passing offense (70) in 2002. Contributing to the Cats' success on the ground was the play of the offensive line, and four starters from that unit return in 2003. Tackles Antonio Hall and Matt Huff are top-notch, while center Nick Seitze and guard Jason Rollins are also tough. Senior Sylvester Miller will compete with a pair of youngsters, Joe Brady and Jared McGowan, for the open guard slot.

The biggest task is replacing Artose Pinner in the backfield. Ronald Johnson is the new fullback, while the tailback duties come down to a pair of average runners, Alexis Bwenge and Arliss Beach. Bwenge and Beach combined for less than 200 yards in 2003.

Meanwhile, the defense returns only four starters and the kicking game is shaky.

The defensive line is in decent shape with Jeremy Caudill and Vincent Burns back. Bennie Mills, Jacob Steuber and Ellery Moore are battling for the other two slots. The early loss of Dewayne Robertson coupled with the coaching change means Kentucky will move from a four-man front to a 3-4 defense.

Unfortunately, Kentucky is lacking in experienced linebackers. No starters return. Incoming freshmen Travis Day and Durrell White could be the Cats' opening-day starters on the outside. Dustin Williams, Justin Haydock and Kamaal Ahmad are in the mix.

This does not bode well for a defensive unit that ranked 82nd in total defense and 87th against the run in 2002. The pass defense wasn't much better (72), but the experience level is higher in the secondary. Leonard Burress, Antonie Huffman and Mike Williams have all fought the SEC wars. Bo Smith, Muhammad Abdullah and Earven Flowers are quality reserves.

Kentucky needs help in the kicking game. The Wildcats have not settled on a punter–Sevin Sucurovic appears to be the leader in the clubhouse–and kicker Taylor Begley missed six extra points in 2002. But kick returns are in excellent hands with Abney. –Jess Nicholas

Coach Joe Novak

Location: DeKalb, Ill.
Nickname: Huskies
Colors: Cardinal and Black
Conference: MAC West
Stadium: Huskie Stadium (31,000)
2002 Record: 8-4 (7-1 MAC)
All-Time Record vs. Alabama: 0-0
Head Coach: Joe Novak (Miami [OH] '67)
Career Record: 28-50, eight years
Record at Northern Illinois: 28-50, eight years
Starters Returning: 13
Offense (6): WR Dan Sheldon, QB Josh Haldi, RB Michael Turner, C Todd Ghilani, TE Brad Cieslak, RT Jake VerStraete
Defense (6): DE Jason Frank, DE Travis Moore, OLB Brian Atkinson, MLB Nick Duffy, S Akil Grant, CB Randee Drew
Specialists (1): PK Steve Azar

2002 Results

August 29	Northern Illinois 42 Wake Forest 21
September 7	South Florida 37 Northern Illinois 6
September 14	Wisconsin 24 Northern Illinois 21
September 21	Western Illinois 29 Northern Illinois 26
September 28	Northern Illinois 13 Kent State 6
October 5	Northern Illinois 41 Ball State 29
October 12	Northern Illinois 48 Miami (OH) 41
October 19	Northern Illinois 49 Central Michigan 0
October 26	Northern Illinois 24 Western Michigan 20
November 9	Northern Illinois 26 Bowling Green 17
November 16	Northern Illinois 49 Eastern Michigan 21
November 23	Toledo 33 Northern Illinois 30

2003 Schedule

August 30	Maryland
September 6	Tennessee Tech
September 20	at Alabama
September 27	Iowa State
October 4	Ohio
October 11	at Central Michigan
October 18	Western Michigan
October 25	at Bowling Green
November 1	Ball State
November 8	at Buffalo
November 15	at Toledo
November 22	Eastern Michigan

When Northern Illinois was first announced for Alabama's schedule, there is little doubt that most Tide fans chalked this one up as a "W." Then, Northern Illinois went 8-4, including ripping off a seven-game winning streak at the end of the year and defeating bowl game winner Wake Forest, then-ranked Bowling Green and putting a scare into Wisconsin. But at the same time, the Huskies dropped a game to Western Illinois and were romped by South Florida.

Northern Illinois operates out of a one-back spread attack, although the team will mix in I-formation. Running back Michael Turner finished as the number two rusher in NCAA Division I last year, and quarterback Josh Haldi threw for 2,027 yards. But Husky quarterbacks completed just 50 per cent of their passes, and threw for a low number of touchdowns (16).

Six starters return from last year's unit. Haldi and Turner form a potent backfield; Turner amassed nearly 2,300 yards in total offense. Dan Sheldon, the team's leading receiver, also returns. He caught 40 passes for 783 yards and five touchdowns.

But the rest of the receiving corps is inexperienced. Keith Perry, Aaron Anderson, Sam Hurd and P.J. Fleck will compete for the vacant receiver and H-back positions. Hurd has a bright future. Brad Cieslak returns as the starting tight end.

Center Todd Ghilani is a national all-star candidate, but only tackle Jake VerStraete returns as a starter. Three new starters are needed, including the entire left side of the Huskies' line. Brian Van Acker is expected to take the right guard position, while Shae Fitzgerald settles in at left tackle. The battle is at left guard, where Joel Ellis and Shaun Schroeder will tussle.

Defensively, linebacker Brian Atkinson is the star and the defense is built around him. The Huskies were good against the run, ranked 38th in the nation in 2002, but a shoddy pass defense (103) hurt them. On the defensive line, Jason Frank is the lone returning starter, with Vinson Reynolds, Martin Wilson and Leonard Cooksey trying to shore up the other spots.

Alongside Atkinson, Nick Duffy returns as the team's middle linebacker. Kursten Strothman slides into the outside position. In the secondary, Northern Illinois boasts a bevy of experienced players, but the quality is questionable. Safety Lionel Hickenbottom is returning from a severe injury that limited him to only one game last year. Cornerback Randee Drew and safety Akil Grant had their moments, and Grant in particular has a nose for the ball. Gerard Taylor, Deon Smith and Rob Lee are battling for the vacant cornerback spot.

The Huskies will kick the ball very well and return kicks very well, but punting is another story. Dan Sheldon led Division I in punt returns last year with a gaudy 22.7 yards per return. Placekicker Steve Azar ranked 16th among kickers, and kickoff return man Randee Drew was also in the top 20. But punting was a nightmare, as the team carried a net punting average of only 29.8 yards per kick. Senior Anthony Gallagher leads a group of unknowns for the job.

–Jess Nicholas

Saturday, September 27 Bryant-Denny Tuscaloosa

GAME FIVE: ARKANSAS

Coach Houston Nutt

Location: Fayetteville, Ark.
Nickname: Razorbacks
Colors: Cardinal and White
Conference: SEC West
Stadium: Reynolds Razorback Stadium (72,000)
2002 Record: 9-5 (5-3 SEC)
All-Time Record vs. Alabama: 4-9-0
Head Coach: Houston Nutt (Oklahoma State, '81)
Career Record: 75-45-0, nine years
Record at Arkansas: 39-23-0, four years
Starters Returning: 18
Offense (9): SE George Wilson, FL Richard Smith, RG Mark Bokermann, RT Shawn Andrews, LT Bo Lacy, C Dan Doughty, TE Jason Peters, QB Matt Jones, FB Mark Pierce
Defense (8): DT Elliot Harris, NG Arrion Dixon, OLB Caleb Miller, OLB Tony Bua, MLB Clarke Moore, CB Lawrence Richardson, CB Batman Carroll, S Jimmy Beasley
Specialists (1): PK David Carlton

2002 Results

September 7	Arkansas 41 Boise State 14
September 14	Arkansas 42 South Florida 3
September 28	Alabama 30 Arkansas 12
October 5	Tennessee 41 Arkansas 38
October 12	Arkansas 38 Auburn 17
October 19	Kentucky 29 Arkansas 17
October 26	Arkansas 48 Ole Miss 28
November 2	Arkansas 23 Troy State 0
November 9	Arkansas 23 South Carolina 0
November 16	Arkansas 24 La.-Lafayette 17
November 23	Arkansas 26 Mississippi State 19
November 29	Arkansas 21 LSU 20
December 7	Georgia 30 Arkansas 3 (SEC Championship)
December 30	Minnesota 29 Arkansas 14 (Music City Bowl)

2003 Schedule

September 6	Tulsa
September 13	at Texas
September 20	North Texas (Little Rock)
September 27	at Alabama
October 11	Auburn
October 18	Florida
October 25	at Ole Miss
November 1	at Kentucky
November 8	South Carolina (Little Rock)
November 15	New Mexico State
November 22	Mississippi State
November 29	at LSU

The relative success of Arkansas football has characteristically ridden on the coattails of its defense, but Arkansas' success in 2003 may depend largely on its quarterback and passing game.

Arkansas boasts a powerful offensive line, possibly the best the conference has to offer. The running backs are deep and talented, while the defense is, for the most part, sound. The difference between success and mediocrity may come from whether Matt Jones or Ryan Sorahan (or both) can deliver at quarterback.

Looking at Jones' athleticism and dangerous presence outside the pocket, one would think Coach Houston Nutt would install Jones at quarterback and build an offense around him. But Arkansas has a deficient passing game, partly because of lack of talent at receiver and partly because of their quarterbacks' inability to hit a moving target. But Nutt has said Arkansas will use a two-quarterback system, even though Sorahan is considered only an average passer and runner.

But the deciding factor may be the development of George Wilson, Decori Birmingham and Richard Smith. Smith and Wilson combined for more than 1,000 yards receiving in 2002, but are erratic. Birmingham is a converted running back, and Arkansas is hoping he becomes what Josh Reed became for LSU. Steven Harris, who has good speed, is another option. Tight end Jason Peters could be a breakout player for the Razorbacks.

The offensive backfield is full of good players. Fullback Mark Pierce, a devastating blocker who can also run and catch effectively, will lead the way for Cedric Cobbs and De'Arrius Howard. Cobbs vacillates between Heisman candidate and total bust from week to week. Howard is a small fullback playing tailback and tends to get better as the game goes on.

Four starters return on the offensive line and the fifth, Jerry Reith, has starting experience in his past. The others–center Dan Doughty, guard Mark Bokermann and tackles Shawn Andrews and Bo Lacy–could each make a case for all-star consideration, particularly as run blockers.

Defensively, Arkansas was a disappointment in 2002. The Hogs finished 83rd in the country in pass defense and only 43rd in total defense. And still there are problems along the defensive line. Jeb Huckaba arrived on campus a quarterback and is now being counted on as a defensive end. Arrion Dixon and Elliot Harris return at the tackle positions, but they have never developed consistency. Justin Scott and Keith Turner are likely to battle for the other defensive end slot.

Tony Bua is back for another year as the Hogs' top outside linebacker. Bua has the speed (and size) of a safety, but the instincts and hitting power of a rover. Caleb Miller and Clarke Moore are both steady and give Bua the freedom to range and make plays.

The defensive backfield may be the most experienced in the conference, with four seniors backing up four players with talent to spare. Arkansas' struggles in pass defense last year may have been more attributable to the lack of a cohesive pass rush. Corners Lawrence Richardson and Batman Carroll are flashy playmakers, while safeties Lerinezo Robinson and Jimmy Beasley are solid athletes. Robinson has been battling injuries, however, which makes the experience of Bo Mosley and Jimarr Gallon so valuable. Backup corners Eddie Jackson and Marvin Jackson could start for most teams.

David Carlton returns at placekicker, while former placekicker Brennan O'Donohoe might be the Hogs' new punter. Coverage and returns last year were mid-pack.

–Jess Nicholas

Saturday, October 4 Sanford Stadium Athens

GAME SIX: GEORGIA

Coach Mark Richt

Location: Athens, Ga.
Nickname: Bulldogs
Colors: Red, Black, Silver and White
Conference: SEC East
Stadium: Sanford Stadium (86,520)
2002 Record: 12-1 (7-1 SEC)
All-Time Record vs. Alabama: 23-35-4
Head Coach: Mark Richt (Miami [Fla.] '82)
Career Record: 20-5, 2 years
Record at Georgia: 20-5, 2 years
Starters Returning: 11
Offense (3): WR Fred Gibson, QB David Greene, TE Benjamin Watson
Defense (7): DE Will Thompson, DE David Pollack, NT Ken Veal, CB Decory Bryant, CB Bruce Thornton, S Kentrell Curry, S Sean Jones
Specialists (1): PK Billy Bennett

2002 Record

August 31	Georgia 31 Clemson 28
September 14	Georgia 13 South Carolina 7
September 21	Georgia 45 Northwestern State 7
September 28	Georgia 41 New Mexico State 10
October 5	Georgia 27 Alabama 25
October 12	Georgia 18 Tennessee 13
October 19	Georgia 48 Vanderbilt 17
October 26	Georgia 52 Kentucky 24
November 2	Florida 20 Georgia 13
November 9	Georgia 31 Ole Miss 17
November 16	Georgia 24 Auburn 21
November 30	Georgia 51 Georgia Tech 7
December 7	Georgia 30 Arkansas 3 (SEC Championship)
January 1	Georgia 26 Florida State 13 (Sugar Bowl)

2003 Schedule

August 30	at Clemson
September 6	Middle Tennessee
September 13	South Carolina
September 20	at LSU
October 4	Alabama
October 11	at Tennessee
October 18	at Vanderbilt
October 25	Alabama-Birmingham
November 1	Florida (Jacksonville)
November 15	Auburn
November 22	Kentucky
November 29	at Georgia Tech

If Peter Falk wants subject material for his next "Columbo" flick, he can start by unraveling the mystery that is Georgia Football in 2003. The team was disassembled by the NFL draft and then besieged by scandal when several of its players were caught selling their SEC Championship rings. Even with the scandal behind them, however, Georgia will have the most inexperienced offensive line in the conference as well as holes at running back and in the linebacking corps.

One thing Georgia does not have a shortage of is a talented group of quarterbacks. David Greene threw for 2,924 yards in 2002, with 22 touchdown passes against only 8 interceptions. D.J. Shockley is his backup, and while not as accomplished a passer as Greene, is an explosive athlete with a strong arm and play-making ability. Shockley, with his "escapability," might be more used this season because of the inexperienced offensive line.

Among the 10 players who make up Georgia's two-deep on the offensive line, none are beyond sophomore. Tackle Max Jean-Giles looks the most likely to be a star of Georgia's future, but the sure bets end there. Josh Brock, Reggie Weeks and Bartley Miller will fight for the two starting guard positions, while Dennis Roland and Daniel Inman fight for the tackle position opposite Jean-Giles. Randall Swoopes and Russ Tanner are the center candidates.

The Dogs must also replace Musa Smith at running back and J.T. Wall at fullback. Sophs Tony Milton and Tyson Browning and freshman Michael Cooper are in the mix for tailback. Cooper didn't play in 2002, while Browning and Milton combined for 412 yards rushing. Signee Kregg Lumpkin is a candidate. Jeremy Thomas and Chris Hickman are fullback possibilities.

Although Terrance Edwards has departed, the receiving corps is top-notch. Fred Gibson is just as dangerous as Edwards. Tight end Benjamin Watson may be the best in the conference. Damien Gary, Reggie Brown and Michael Johnson, the three receivers battling to take Edwards' place, are all proven.

Defensively, there are holes but the core of the unit returns. All four starters in the secondary, which finished 31st in the nation last year, are back. Decory Bryant and Bruce Thornton are athletic corners, while Sean Jones and Kentrell Curry are rangy, quick safeties. Tim Jennings gives Georgia a dangerous nickel back off the bench.

The defensive line is led by end David Pollack, perhaps the conference's best pass rusher. Ken Veal at nose tackle is also one of the league's best. Kedric Golston and Darrius Swain will battle for the vacant tackle slot, while returning starter Will Thompson rotates with Robert Geathers, Shedrick Wynn and Marquis Elmore at the other end position.

The question mark will be at linebacker, where all three starters from 2002 must be replaced. Thomas Davis gets the call at strong-side linebacker. He has a safety's build but hits very hard and can contain the run. Tony Taylor starts opposite him. There is a battle in the middle between Odell Thurman and Derrick White, with Thurman the early favorite. Derrick Holloway and Arnold Harrison back up the outside positions.

Billy Bennett was deadly as Georgia's placekicker last year, perfect on his extra points while making 26-of-33 field goals and finishing the season ranked second among placekickers nationally. Punter, however, is wide open, with signee Andy Bailey battling Lee Jackson and Gordon Ely-Kelso for the spot. **–Jess Nicholas**

Saturday, October 11
Bryant-Denny
Tuscaloosa

GAME SEVEN: SOUTHERN MISS

Coach Jeff Bower

Location: Hattiesburg, Miss.
Nickname: Golden Eagles
Colors: Black and Gold
Conference: Conference USA
Stadium: M.M. Roberts (33,000)
2002 Record: 7-6 (5-3 Conference USA)
All-Time Record vs. Alabama: 6-31-2
Head Coach: Jeff Bower (Southern Miss, '75)
Career Record: 80-58-1, 12 years
Record at Southern Miss: 80-58-1, 12 years
Starters Returning: 13
Offense (5): QB Micky D'Angelo, C Jim Hicks, LG Jeremy Parquet, WR Marvin Young, WR Chris Johnson
Defense (8): DE Ronald Jones, DE Eric Scott, S Etric Pruitt, S Alex Ray, CB Greg Brooks, OLB Michael Boley, MLB Rod Davis, Bandit Terrell Paul
Specialists (0)

2002 Results

August 31	Southern Miss 55 Jackson State 7
September 7	Southern Miss 23 Illinois 20
September 14	Southern Miss 33 Memphis 14
September 21	Alabama 20 Southern Miss 7
September 28	Southern Miss 27 Army 6
October 12	South Florida 16 Southern Miss 13
October 19	Southern Miss 23 Cincinnati 14
October 30	TCU 37 Southern Miss 7
November 9	Southern Miss 20 Alabama-Birmingham 13
November 14	Louisville 20 Southern Miss 17
November 23	Tulane 31 Southern Miss 10
November 30	Southern Miss 24 East Carolina 7
December 27	Oklahoma State 33 Southern Miss 23 (Houston Bowl)

2003 Schedule

August 30	at California
September 4	at Alabama-Birmingham
September 13	Memphis
September 25	Nebraska
October 4	at Cincinnati
October 11	at Alabama
October 25	South Florida
November 1	Louisiana-Lafayette
November 8	at Houston
November 15	Tulane
November 20	TCU
November 29	at East Carolina

Low-scoring, nail-biting games are getting to be the norm when Alabama takes on Southern Mississippi. This year will likely be no different. In recent years, Southern Miss has leaned on a defense filled with quick, tough players while the offense has sputtered a bit. USM returns 13 starters for 2003, eight of them on defense. Early indications are this will once again be a team tough to move the ball against, but a team that has trouble advancing the football against larger defenses.

The strength of the defense is its linebacking corps, although the secondary can hold its own. Southern Miss ranked 10th in the nation in pass defense in 2002 and fourth in pass efficiency defense. That ranking came largely as the result of having fearless playmakers in its linebacking corps and ball hawks in the secondary.

Rod Davis, a whopping 6-3, 245, is a middle linebacker who will probably be playing in the NFL in 2004. He is flanked by Michael Boley and Antoine Cash, with Kevis Coley providing backup at both slots.

Terrell Paul is known as a "bandit" in Southern Mississippi's scheme, meaning he is a kind of stand-up end who can either play down or as a roving linebacker. Combined with defensive ends Ronald Jones and Eric Scott, Paul provides Southern Miss with a spectacular pass rush.

The key will be what Southern Miss is able to come up with in the middle. Terrance Ford is the leading candidate to fill the nose tackle position, although Jared Parten is pushing him. Greg Casnave is also competing.

The secondary is very strong. Etric Pruitt could start for much larger schools. He is the free safety and joins Alex Ray, the rover, in the middle of the scheme. Greg Brooks is a lockdown cornerback. John Eubanks and Seth Cumbie will see most of the time at the other cornerback position.

Offensively there are questions. Southern Miss is moving to a two-back set with the arrival of new Offensive Coordinator Rip Scherer. The change, USM hopes, will take some of the pressure off an average group of quarterbacks. Micky D'Angelo and Dustin Almond are the chief competitors for the position, but neither is considered a flashy playmaker. The quarterback will have a pair of experienced wideouts to throw to in Chris Johnson and Marvin Young. Those two combined for more than 1,200 yards in receiving in 2002.

Even though USM will move to a two-back look much of the time, they will still retain a lot of their three-wide offense from last year. A side benefit to that is a host of experienced wide receivers. When USM goes three-wide this year, look for DaRon Lawrence and Antwon Courington to get the call. Terrell Browden and Otho Graves will replace Bobby Garner at tight end.

Replacing Derrick Nix at tailback will be James Walley. Anthony Harris, Nix's primary backup last year, slides to fullback but could be at tailback when the Golden Eagles go three wide. William Adams and Timmy Blackwell are the primary backups. Whereas Nix was a taller, more powerful back, Walley and Harris are basically bowling balls. Both are shorter than six feet tall and weigh around 210 pounds.

The offensive line is a question mark. Center Jim Hicks can play with anyone, and guard Jeremy Parquet is experienced. But the rest are mostly inexperienced and young players. Myron Powe will start at tackle opposite Neal Mead, and freshman Travis Cooley has the inside track to be the new right guard.

The Golden Eagles must also find new kickers. Derek Jacobs has the inside track to be the starting placekicker, although signee Darren McCaleb should challenge. The punting position is up for grabs, with Luke Johnson and Neal Schmidt the favorites.

This will be Alabama's Homecoming Game. –Jess Nicholas

Saturday, October 18
Vaught-Hemmingway
Oxford

GAME EIGHT: MISSISSIPPI

Coach David Cutcliffe

Location: Oxford, Miss.
Nickname: Rebels
Colors: Cardinal Red and Navy Blue
Conference: SEC West
Stadium: Vaught-Hemingway (60,000)
2002 Record: 7-6 (3-5 SEC)
All-Time Record vs. Alabama: 8-40-2
Head Coach: David Cutcliffe (Alabama, '78)
Career Record: 30-19, 5 years
Record at Ole Miss: 30-19, 5 years
Starters Returning: 16
Offense (6): QB Eli Manning, FB Rick Razzano, WR Chris Collins, LT Tre' Stallings, LG Doug Buckles, RG Marcus Johnson
Defense (8): DE Josh Cooper, NT Jesse Mitchell, DE Charlie Anderson, OLB Justin Wade, CB Travis Johnson, CB Von Hutchins, S Eric Oliver, S Travis Blanchard
Specialists (2): P Cody Ridgeway, PK Jonathan Nichols

2002 Results

August 31	Ole Miss 31 La.-Monroe 3
September 7	Ole Miss 38 Memphis 16
September 14	Texas Tech 42 Ole Miss 28
September 21	Ole Miss 45 Vanderbilt 38
October 5	Ole Miss 17 Florida 14
October 12	Ole Miss 52 Arkansas State 17
October 19	Alabama 42 Ole Miss 7
October 26	Arkansas 48 Ole Miss 28
November 2	Auburn 31 Ole Miss 24
November 9	Georgia 31 Ole Miss 17
November 23	LSU 14 Ole Miss 13
November 28	Ole Miss 24 Mississippi State 12
December 27	Ole Miss 27 Nebraska 23 (Independence Bowl)

2002 Schedule

August 30	at Vanderbilt
September 6	at Memphis
September 13	Louisiana-Monroe
September 27	Texas Tech
October 4	at Florida
October 11	Arkansas State
October 18	Alabama
October 25	Arkansas
November 1	South Carolina
November 8	at Auburn
November 22	LSU
November 27	at Mississippi State

The 2002 highlight video for the Ole Miss Rebels could be titled "Missed Opportunities." With Alabama on probation and the rest of the SEC Western Division in full retreat for most of the year, Ole Miss could have stepped up to claim its first division title. Instead, the Rebels lost six games, including five in a row before defeating Mississippi State on the season's final weekend. This year will probably be the Rebels' last legitimate shot at the division title for some time. Eli Manning is back for his senior season at quarterback, and the Rebels have most of their running backs, receivers and defensive players returning from last year.

Offensively, it's the same faces in familiar places. Manning is back for another turn behind center, but last year was not his best effort. Although Manning threw for 3,401 yards, he threw 15 interceptions to go along with his 21 touchdowns. Making matters worse, Ole Miss' rushing offense ranked an anemic 110th in the country, putting too much pressure on Manning to make all the plays.

Rick Razzano is back as Ole Miss' fullback, ahead of Brandon Jacobs. But running back is a question mark. With an injury in spring practice to Jamal Pittman, seen by many as the Rebels' savior at the position, converted fullback Tremaine Turner and scatback Ronald McClendon are now the leaders for the position. Neither is a complete back. Turner has good power but not enough speed; McClendon is shifty and fast but is not effective between the tackles.

Complicating the problem is that the offensive line must be rebuilt. Guards Doug Buckles and Marcus Johnson return along with tackle Tré Stallings, but Ole Miss must replace Ben Claxton at center. Veteran reserve Justin Sawyer appears to be the top candidate, although Tony Bonds could step up. Cliff Woodruff takes over the other tackle position.

Manning will have a group of talented, experienced wide receivers to work with. Chris Collins and Bill Flowers proved to be a fine twosome last year and both are back, although Flowers is battling injury. Mike Espy and Ratavious Biddle will see plenty of action. A new tight end combo of Eric Rice, Lawrence Lilly and Jimmy Brooks must be broken in.

Defensively, Ole Miss was a surprise in 2002. The team finished 28th in the country in pass defense, although the rush defense came in at 65th. That continues to be a concern with the Rebels' undersized defensive line. Jesse Mitchell went from linebacker to defensive end to nose tackle, and he is only 6-1, 270. Ends Josh Cooper and Charlie Anderson are also smaller than most SEC ends. The vacant interior tackle slot will probably be manned by McKinley Boykin, although Michael Bozeman is pushing him. Reserve ends are Jayme Mitchell and Cory Robinson.

Ole Miss uses only two linebackers in its 4-2-5 scheme, but they're good ones. L.P. Spence and Justin Wade rank among the best in the conference. The depth, however, is questionable. Ken Bournes has promise but is largely untested.

Travis Blanchard and Von Hutchins will carry the defensive backfield. Eric Oliver is an underrated free safety. Kelvin Robinson and Jeremy Ruffin will battle for the strong safety spot, while Travis Johnson will start at the other cornerback slot opposite Hutchins. As with the linebacker group, depth is questionable.

Ole Miss had poor special teams just two years ago, but it may be a strength now. Punter Cody Ridgeway has improved steadily, while placekicker Jonathan Nichols is more than adequate. The return game needs to improve.

–Jess Nicholas

Coach Phil Fulmer

Location: Knoxville, Tenn.
Nickname: Volunteers
Colors: Orange & White
Conference: SEC East
Stadium: Neyland Stadium (104,079)
2002 Record: 8-5 (5-3 SEC)
All-Time Record vs. Alabama: 35-43-7
Head Coach: Phillip Fulmer (Tennessee, '72)
Career Record: 103-25, 11 years
Record at Tennessee: 103-25, 11 years
Starters Returning: 13
Offense (8): QB Casey Clausen, FB Troy Fleming, RB Cedric Houston, WR Tony Brown, LT Michael Munoz, LG Jason Respert, C Scott Wells, RG Chavis Smith
Defense (4): MLB Robert Peace, CB Jabari Greer, S Gibril Wilson, S Rashad Baker
Specialists (1): P Dustin Colquitt

2002 Results

August 31	Tennessee 47 Wyoming 7
September 7	Tennessee 26 Middle Tennessee 3
September 21	Florida 30 Tennessee 13
September 28	Tennessee 35 Rutgers 14
October 5	Tennessee 41 Arkansas 38
October 12	Georgia 18 Tennessee 13
October 26	Alabama 34 Tennessee 14
November 2	Tennessee 24 South Carolina 10
November 9	Miami 26 Tennessee 3
November 16	Tennessee 35 Mississippi State 17
November 23	Tennessee 24 Vanderbilt 0
November 30	Tennessee 24 Kentucky 0
December 31	Maryland 30 Tennessee 3 (Peach Bowl)

2003 Schedule

August 30	Fresno State
September 6	Marshall
September 20	at Florida
September 27	South Carolina
October 4	at Auburn
October 11	Georgia
October 25	at Alabama
November 1	Duke
November 8	at Miami
November 15	Mississippi State
November 22	Vanderbilt
November 29	at Kentucky

It could be argued that, in terms of pure talent, last year's Tennessee team squandered the most of any team in the conference since Alabama went 3-8 in 2000. Tennessee finished the 2002 campaign 8-5 and ranked among the top of several statistical categories nationwide. But the Vols got dumped by Alabama and Florida during the regular season, then got embarrassed by Maryland in the Peach Bowl.

Much of last year's difficulty can be traced to a strange and subpar season by quarterback Casey Clausen. Clausen's health was an issue and his numbers were never particularly impressive. He finished the campaign ranked 29th nationally in passing efficiency and completing 194-of-310 passes for 2,297 yards, but threw for only 11 touchdowns. Clausen is a key component to Tennessee's success.

He'll certainly have the chance to do that, as Tennessee returns seven other starters on offense including the backfield of fullback Troy Fleming and tailback Cedric Houston. Fleming isn't much of a blocker, but is an above-average runner for a fullback and also a good receiver. Houston isn't the flashiest back but he gets result. His backup, Gerald Riggs, is a power back in the Jamal Lewis mold but hasn't shown the moves necessary to be an SEC star. Derrick Tinsley will split time between receiver and running back.

The offensive line is also full of veterans. Center Scott Wells, guards Chavis Smith and Jason Respert, and tackle Michael Munoz all return for 2003. Sean Young, who will fill the other tackle slot, also has starting experience, as does backup guard Anthony Herrera. But aside from Herrera, the other reserves are unknowns. Health has been a problem for Vol linemen in the recent past, and a couple of injuries this season could be devastating.

Tony Brown returns at one of the wide receiver positions, but the rest are up for grabs and the pickings are slim by Tennessee standards. Mark Jones was moved from safety and won a starting spot. Jonathan Wade and C.J. Fayton have not developed as expected. The door is open for Tinsley, Jomo Fagan, or Ryan Boswell. The tight end position suffered a serious downgrade when Jason Witten turned pro. Victor McClure leads Justin Reed for the position.

Defensively, Tennessee must rebuild. Only middle linebacker Robert Peace returns among the front seven. Kevin Burnett and Jason Mitchell will flank Peace in the linebacking corps. Burnett has been injury-prone, but is a good pass rusher. Kevin Simon will back up all three positions, as depth is suspect.

While Tennessee technically returns no defensive line starters, the four players there–tackles Mondre Dickerson and Greg Jones and ends Karlton Neal and Constantin Ritzmann–have all started. While depth at end is in good shape with Parys Haralson and J.T. Mapu, the interior is freshmen and walk-ons.

Things are much better in the secondary, where three starters return. Gibril Wilson and Rashad Baker are quality safeties and cornerback Jabari Greer has had a solid career. O.J. Owens, Jason Allen and Antwan Stewart are candidates at the other cornerback position.

Dustin Colquitt is one of the conference's best punters, but the loss of placekicker Alex Walls will be felt. Philip Newman and James Wilhoit are competing for the place-kicking duties.

–Jess Nicholas

Saturday, November 8
Scott Field
Starkville

GAME TEN: MISSISSIPPI STATE

Coach Jackie Sherrill

Location: Starkville, Miss.
Nickname: Bulldogs
Colors: Maroon and White
Conference: SEC West
Stadium: Davis Wade Stadium at Scott Field (52,844)
2002 Record: 3-9 (0-8 SEC)
All-Time Record vs. Alabama: 15-69-3
Head Coach: Jackie Sherrill (Alabama, '66)
Career Record: 178-110-4, 25 years
Record at Mississippi State: 73-65-2, 12 years
Starters Returning: 15
Offense (6): QB Kyle York, RB Fred Reid, C Blake Jones, LG Brad Weathers, RT David Stewart, WR Justin Jenkins
Defense (7): DE Tommy Kelly, DT Ronald Fields, DT Lennie Day, LB T.J. Mawhinney, S Jason Clark, S Kevin Dockery, S Darren Williams
Specialists (2): P Jared Cook, PK Brent Smith

2002 Results

August 31	Oregon 36 Mississippi State 13
September 14	Mississippi State 51 Jacksonville State 13
September 19	Auburn 42 Mississippi State 14
September 28	LSU 31 Mississippi State 13
October 5	South Carolina 34 Mississippi State 10
October 12	Mississippi State 11 Troy State 8
October 19	Mississippi State 29 Memphis State 17
November 2	Kentucky 45 Mississippi State 24
November 9	Alabama 28 Mississippi State 14
November 16	Tennessee 35 Mississippi State 17
November 23	Arkansas 26 Mississippi State 19
November 28	Ole Miss 24 Mississippi State 12

2003 Schedule

August 30	Oregon
September 13	at Tulane
September 20	at Houston
September 27	LSU
October 4	Vanderbilt
October 11	Memphis
October 18	at Auburn
October 25	at Kentucky
November 8	Alabama
November 15	at Tennessee
November 22	at Arkansas
November 27	Ole Miss

If a 3-9 record wasn't bad enough, the Mississippi State Bulldogs enter the 2003 season under a cloud of uncertainty due to an ongoing NCAA investigation. It is a situation MSU's closest neighbor, Alabama, knows very well. But while Alabama is approaching the back end of its sanctions and is coming off a 10-win season, the Bulldogs lost three times as many games as they won last season and the worst may be yet to come.

Bulldog quarterbacks threw 22 interceptions against only 13 touchdowns in 2002, and Kevin Fant–long thought to be the Bulldogs' savior at quarterback–might not even play this year. Defensively, a number three national ranking in pass defense couldn't save Joe Lee Dunn's coordinator job.

Morris Watts takes over as offensive coordinator (replacing Sparky Woods, now at Bama), and the first order of business will be finding someone who can throw the football. That somebody could have been Fant, but it is unclear whether he will play this season after leaving the team during spring training. Fant's departure leaves the job in the hands of Kyle York. Unlike Fant, who was a mobile passer that could improvise on the fly, York is a pocket passer who was just 63-of-129 (48.8 per cent) for 693 yards, three touchdowns and 10 interceptions last year. It is for that reason that Bulldog fans are hoping Omarr Conner, an incoming freshman, might take the job. Conner has running back speed and a good arm.

Of equal importance is establishing a running game. Fred Reid looks like the new tailback, and his one touchdown last year leads all returning running backs. His backup, Jerious Norwood, has a better prep pedigree than Reid but isn't as consistent. Nick Turner runs third team. Darnell Jones will start at fullback, but depth consists of Nick Signaigo, a walk-on transfer from Alabama.

The offensive line is a patchwork of players who spent a lot of time on the training table last year. Center Blake Jones is probably the class of this unit, although tackle David Stewart is athletic enough. Guards Chris McNeil and Brad Weathers have played a good bit. The real question mark is left tackle, where Richard Burch draws the assignment of protecting the quarterback's backside.

Justin Jenkins returns for his senior season at wide receiver opposite a couple of inconsistent playmakers, Tee Milons and Ray Ray Bivines. Senior Aaron Lumpkin draws tight end duties. None of this group has big numbers.

Defensively, things aren't much better. The Bulldogs' leading returning sack man, defensive end Tommy Kelly, recorded only two last season. Mississippi State will move from Dunn's strange 5-1-5 alignment to Ron Cooper's more conventional 4-2-5 scheme this year. That move will allow T.J. Mawhinney to get some help at linebacker. Mawhinney is a solid player up the middle. His new linebacker mate is likely to be Marvin Byrdsong, who is already drawing comparisons to last year's defensive star Mario Haggan.

Up front, Kelly returns at one defensive end slot opposite either Willie Evans or Robert Spivey. Things are a bit better up the middle with Ronald Fields, Lennie Day and Kamau Jackson all boasting starting experience. Jadice Moore is also talented. But the players will have to get used to new assignments and roles now that the defensive alignment has changed.

Gone are the "dog" safeties that barked in Dunn's defensive backfield. In are a pair of strong safeties, Jason Clark and Kevin Dockery, who are returning starters from last year's group. Free safety Darren Williams also has starting experience. It is the cornerbacks who will be tested early. Demetric Wright and Odell Bradley are both seniors, but have been inconsistent. David Heard and signee Quinton Culberson are reserves.

Jared Cook has developed into a fine punter. Brent Smith had a good year as placekicker and returns for his senior season. Bivines and Milons are the likely kick returners.

–Jess Nicholas

Saturday, November 15 Bryant-Denny Tuscaloosa

GAME ELEVEN: LSU

Coach Nick Saban

Location: Baton Rouge, La.
Nickname: Bengal Tigers
Colors: Purple and Gold
Conference: SEC West
Stadium: Tiger Stadium (91,600)
2002 Record: 8-5 (5-3 SEC)
All-Time Record vs. Alabama: 18-43-5
Head Coach: Nick Saban (Kent State, '73)
Career Record: 69-38-1, 9 years
Record at LSU: 26-12, 3 years
Starters Returning: 16
Offense (8): WR Michael Clayton, LT Andrew Whitworth, C Ben Wilkerson, RG Stephen Peterman, RT Rodney Reed, TE Eric Edwards, QB Matt Mauck
Defense (7): DE Marquise Hill, DE Marcus Spears, DT Chad Lavalais, OLB Lionel Turner, CB Corey Webster, CB Randall Gay, S Jack Hunt
Specialists (1): P Donnie Jones

2002 Results

September 1	Virginia Tech 26 LSU 8
September 7	LSU 35 The Citadel 10
September 14	LSU 33 Miami (OH) 7
September 28	LSU 31 Mississippi State 13
October 5	LSU 48 La.-Lafayette 0
October 12	LSU 36 Florida 7
October 19	LSU 38 South Carolina 14
October 26	Auburn 31 LSU 7
November 9	LSU 33 Kentucky 30
November 16	Alabama 31 LSU 0
November 23	LSU 14 Ole Miss 13
November 29	Arkansas 21 LSU 20
January 1	Texas 35 LSU 20 (Cotton Bowl)

2003 Schedule

August 30	Louisiana-Monroe
September 6	at Arizona
September 13	Western Illinois
September 20	Georgia
September 27	at Mississippi State
October 11	Florida
October 18	at South Carolina
October 25	Auburn
November 1	Louisiana Tech
November 15	at Alabama
November 22	at Ole Miss
November 29	Arkansas

Oh, for a quarterback. LSU's football team has dreams of wild success, and with good reason. For the most part, this team boasts the best balance of talent and experience in the conference.

Oh, for a quarterback.

Last year's success was marred by a freak show known as the Matt Mauck-Marcus Randall quarterback battle. Mauck, the unlikely hero of the 2001 SEC Championship Game, was seen as a mobile quarterback with moxie and a flair for the dramatic. Randall was a strong-armed sharpshooter in the mold of a Rohan Davey.

Instead, both players turned out to be busts. Combined with another candidate, Rick Clausen, LSU quarterbacks combined for just 136-of-278 (48.9 per cent) passing and 1,797 yards, poor enough to land them at 102nd in the nation in passing offense.

That isn't good for any school, much less one that had access to receivers Michael Clayton and Jerel Myers. Clayton is back, but it won't matter much if LSU can't find someone to throw to him. Most expect Mauck to start the season, but most also expect last year's Alabama Mr. Football, JaMarcus Russell, to soon win the job.

Whoever is under center will have his choice of weapons. Despite LSU's failings at quarterback, Clayton still managed to bag 749 yards and five touchdowns on 57 receptions. He'll be joined by Devery Henderson, Skyler Green and tight end Eric Edwards as primary targets. Signee Amp Hill will play, too.

Running back is a bit less certain, although LSU has talent. Joseph Addai averaged 5.5 yards per carry and averaged a touchdown every 20 carries. To make matters worse for opposing defenses, he's backed up by Shyrone Carey, who might be a better overall player. Carey's only downside is his size, barely 5-6.

LSU must only replace one starter on the offensive line, and Terrell McGill looks ready to fill Rob Sale's left guard slot. He joins tackles Andrew Whitworth and Rodney Reed, guard Stephen Peterman and center Ben Wilkerson in one of the conference's finest units. The reserves are relatively inexperienced.

Defensively, things are almost as good. LSU ranked in the top 10 nationally in three defensive categories (second in pass defense, fifth in pass efficiency defense, eighth in total defense) and most of last year's personnel return. Along the defensive line, Marquise Hill and Marcus Spears are probably the best one-two punch among defensive ends in the SEC. Chad Lavalais has gone from a good tight end to a very good defensive tackle. The only question mark is at the other interior slot, where Kyle Williams has a slight edge over Torran Williams and Brandon Washington. Bryce Wyatt is an experienced reserve end, and Melvin Oliver shows promise.

The secondary also returns mostly intact. Corey Webster and Randall Gay are back at the corners, while Jack Hunt returns at free safety. Adrian Mayes wasn't the starter last year at strong safety, but he played enough there that there won't be much of a drop-off. Safety Ryan Gilbert and cornerback Ronnie Prude are top-notch backups.

The only concern is at linebacker, where only Lionel Turner returns from last year. The other two slots are most likely to go to little-used seniors Jason LeDoux and Eric Alexander. Willie Demps has an impressive prep resume but hasn't played in a SEC game yet. Alonzo Manuel, Dave Peterson and Cameron Vaughn are also in the mix. This situation will be watched closely.

Punting is in the capable hands of Donnie Jones, who has a shotgun for a leg. He is easily considered a pro prospect. The placekicker, however, doesn't come as highly regarded. Andre Boagni, a freshman, leads fellow freshman Ryan Gaudet for the position. Signee Chris Jackson will compete for the job in the fall. –Jess Nicholas

Saturday, November 22 Jordan-Hare Auburn

GAME TWELVE: AUBURN

Coach Tommy Tuberville

Location: Auburn, Ala.
Nickname: Tigers
Colors: Burnt Orange and Navy Blue
Conference: SEC West
Stadium: Jordan-Hare Stadium (85,214)
2002 Record: 9-4 (5-3 SEC)
All-Time Record vs. Alabama: 28-38-1
Head Coach: Tommy Tuberville (Southern Arkansas, '76)
Career Record: 55-39, 8 years
Record at Auburn: 37-19, 4 years
Starters Returning: 16
Offense (8): QB Jason Campbell, RB Carnell Williams, FB Brandon Johnson, WR Devin Aromashodu, LT Mark Pera, RT Marcus McNeill, C Danny Lindsey, RG Monreko Crittenden
Defense (8): NT DeMarco McNeil, DT Spencer Johnson, OLB Karlos Dansby, MLB Dontarrious Thomas, DE Jay Ratliff, DE Reggie Torbor, CB Carlos Rogers, CB Junior Rosegreen
Specialists (0)

2002 Results

September 2	Southern Cal 24 Auburn 17
September 7	Auburn 56 Western Carolina 0
September 14	Auburn 31 Vanderbilt 6
September 19	Auburn 42 Mississippi State 14
September 28	Auburn 37 Syracuse 34
October 12	Arkansas 38 Auburn 17
October 19	Florida 30 Auburn 23
October 26	Auburn 31 LSU 7
November 2	Auburn 31 Ole Miss 24
November 9	Auburn 52 Louisiana-Monroe 14
November 16	Georgia 24 Auburn 21
November 23	Auburn 17 Alabama 7
January 1	Auburn 13 Penn State 9 (Capital One Bowl)

2003 Schedule

August 30	Southern Cal
September 6	at Georgia Tech
September 13	at Vanderbilt
September 27	Western Kentucky
October 4	Tennessee
October 11	at Arkansas
October 18	Mississippi State
October 25	at LSU
November 1	Louisiana-Monroe
November 8	Ole Miss
November 15	at Georgia
November 22	Alabama

Auburn hopes to answer many questions this fall. Can the Tigers beat Alabama at home for the first time since 1997? Can Auburn compete for a national championship for the first time in more than 40 years? And can a team be considered a national championship contender with no established kicking game?

Whether it is the state of college football as a whole or simply the hype machine in overdrive for a team that has never won 10 games in a season under its current coach, Auburn is the SEC favorite of nearly every poll going into the 2003 season.

If championships were won simply on the basis of what's in a team's offensive backfield, Auburn would be in Super Bowl territory. Auburn is loaded there. The Tigers can choose to start Carnell Williams, a shifty and powerful, yet oft-injured breakaway threat. They can start workhorse Ronnie Brown, or speedy scatback Tre Smith. Or, Auburn can go with junior college transfer Brandon Jacobs, who weighs more today than did the team's left defensive tackle when he hit campus four years ago. Blocking for whoever the starter is will be Brandon Johnson, perhaps the most adept at that craft in the SEC right now.

But while most championships come via a strong ground game, it takes more than talent at running back. The offensive line is a major consideration, as is enough of a passing game to keep the opposing defenses honest.

The offensive line should be covered, at least from a run-blocking standpoint. Danny Lindsey moves from guard to center, his natural position, and should continue to develop into one of the better ones. Mark Pera and the huge Marcus McNeill will start at tackles, with Monreko Crittenden starting at one of the guard slots. The other guard slot will probably go to Troy Reddick.

But a passing game is something Auburn seemed to lack through most of 2002. Quarterback Jason Campbell completed nearly 64 percent of his passes last season, but his most dangerous weapon may be his legs. When bottled up, Campbell can hit the road, and he gained more than 200 yards on the ground last year.

Auburn has several receivers to choose from, but none were particularly effective in 2002. Devin Aromashodu is the leading returning receiver with just 304 yards. Jeris McIntyre, Courtney Taylor and Ben Obamanu are also available. But it's tight end Cooper Wallace who could prove to be the breakout player of this bunch.

Auburn's front defensive seven is as good as anyone's, but the depth is suspect and the defensive line has been injury-prone over the last few years. Overachievers DeMarco McNeil and Spencer Johnson anchor the inside of the line with Dexter Murphy and Wayne Dickens backing them up. Reggie Torbor has developed into a solid pass rusher outside, and Jay Ratliff is serviceable.

Karlos Dansby and Dontarrious Thomas are a lethal one-two combination at linebacker. Travis Williams and Lemarcus Rowell (if still on the team) will battle for the outside slot opposite the spectacular Dansby.

The defensive backfield is a bit suspect despite experience. Corners Junior Rosegreen and Carlos Rogers and safeties Roshard Gilyard and Donnay Young have been around a long time. Rogers is a consistent playmaker.

The biggest challenge may be filling the kicking slots. Phillip Yost was wild in relief of Damon Duval last year, but he's the best option. Kody Bliss and Michael Gibson will battle for the punting position.

–Jess Nicholas

Saturday,
November 29
Aloha Stadium
Honolulu

GAME THIRTEEN: HAWAII

Coach June Jones

Location: Manoa, Hawaii.
Nickname: Warriors
Colors: Green, Black and White
Conference: WAC
Stadium: Aloha Stadium (50,000)
2000 Record: 10-4 (7-1 WAC)
All-Time Record vs. Alabama: 0-1
Head Coach: June Jones (Portland State, '75)
Career Record: 31-20, 4 years
Record at Hawaii: 31-20, 4 years
Starters Returning: 14
Offense (6): WR Chad Owens, WR Nate Ilaoa, WR Jeremiah Cockheran, LG Shayne Kajioka, RG Uriah Moenoa, QB Timmy Chang
Defense (7): DE Houston Ala, DT Isaac Sopoaga, DT Lance Samuseva, CB Abraham Elimimian, CB Kelvin Millhouse, S David Gilmore, S Hyrum Peters
Specialists (1): PK Justin Ayat

2002 Results

August 31	Hawaii 61 Eastern Illinois 36
September 6	BYU 35 Hawaii 32
September 21	Hawaii 31 UTEP 6
September 28	Hawaii 42 SMU 10
October 5	Boise State 58 Hawaii 31
October 12	Hawaii 59 Nevada 34
October 20	Hawaii 37 Tulsa 14
October 25	Hawaii 31 Fresno State 21
November 2	Hawaii 40 San Jose State 31
November 16	Hawaii 33 Rice 28
November 23	Hawaii 20 Cincinnati 19
November 30	Alabama 21 Hawaii 16
December 7	Hawaii 41 San Diego State 40
December 25	Tulane 36 Hawaii 28 (Hawaii Bowl)

2003 Schedule

August 30	Appalachian State
September 13	at Southern Cal
September 19	at UNLV
September 27	Rice
October 4	at Tulsa
October 11	Fresno State
October 18	at Louisiana Tech
October 25	UTEP
November 1	at San Jose State
November 15	at Nevada
November 22	Army
November 29	Alabama
December 6	Boise State

It isn't known exactly what Alabama fans were thinking prior to the Tide's trip to Hawaii last year. But after the game, the best way to describe it could have been an immense sigh of relief. The Warriors put a major scare into Alabama, who held on late to win by a score of 21-16. If anything, it reminded people that the run-and-shoot offense is a dangerous weapon in the hands of a quarterback who knows how to run it.

That described Hawaii quarterback Timmy Chang perfectly. And Chang is back. Chang finished the 2002 season with unbelievable passing numbers: 349-of-624 for 4,474 yards, 25 touchdowns and 22 interceptions. Hawaii runs a true run-and-shoot, passing on nearly every down and running only when it is necessary. While Hawaii recorded the second-best passing attack in the nation last year, it finished 100th in rushing.

Six starters from that madcap offense return in 2003, including Chang behind center and three of the four starting wide receivers. Britton Komine accumulated the most yardage of any returning player, catching 58 passes for 886 yards and 10 touchdowns–and he wasn't even a starter in 2002. Komine will be joined by Nate Iloaa and Jeremiah Cockheran. Chad Owens, Mike Akiu, Kanale George and Clifton Herbert are other possibilities.

John West is the leading returning rusher, accumulating 451 yards on 59 carries in 2002. Junior Mike Bass, however, appears set to supplant West as the starting running back.

The offensive line returns from last year's offensive line, guards Shayne Kajioka and Uriah Moenoa. The starting left tackle is likely to be freshman Samson Satele, but he'll be pushed by junior Ryan Santos and fellow freshman Dane Uperesa. Whoever loses that battle will likely shift over to the right side of the line. Center is a battle between Derek Faavi and Phil Kauffman.

Hawaii was not very good on defense last year, ranking 79th overall, 71st in passing defense, and 79th in rushing defense. The Warriors also finished 97th in turnover margin, averaging a full turnover more per game than they picked up.

Defensively, Hawaii returns seven starters, including three of their four down linemen. Tackle Isaac Sopoaga is an all-star candidate and anchors the middle of the line with help from Lance Samuseva. Defensive end Houston Ala is excellent. The vacant end slot will be manned by either Kevin Jackson or Travis LaBoy.

Hawaii also returns all four defensive backfield starters, although this group struggled against most opponents. Abraham Elimimian and Kelvin Millhouse start at the corners with David Gilmore and Hyrum Peters at safety.

The linebacking corps must be completely rebuilt, with no starters returning for 2003. Chad Kalilimoku has experience and will anchor the group from the middle, with Keani Alapa and Ikaika Curnan coming off the corners. Lincoln Manutai, Patrick Lavar Harley and Tyrone Brown provide the depth. Like many of Hawaii's players, this group is fast and athletic but slightly undersized.

Placekicker Justin Ayat is a quality kicker, but the starter at punter is uncertain. Tim Wright, who transferred to Hawaii from a Mississippi junior college, figures to have the inside track.

–Jess Nicholas

RECRUITING

Family connection involves three top Alabama prep football prospects

by Freddie Kirby

For as long as The University of Alabama has had a football team, it has had family connections, numerous combinations of brothers and/or father-son Crimson Tiders. From the Bankheads and Sewells, Singtons and Hannahs and Neighbors, Davises and Rutledges, Lowes and Goodes and Rockwells, to Penningtons and Lukes, Roaches and Britts, Croyles and Castilles, and many others.

At few other schools are these bloodlines as cherished as they are at Alabama. And it seems that in every year of recruiting one of these family connections arises. Last season, Dwight Stephenson, Jr., (son of Hall of Famer and perhaps best center in NFL history, Dwight Stephenson) graduated from Pope John Paul II High School in Boca Raton, Florida. To the disappointment of many Alabama faithful, the Franchione staff didn't as much as send a letter to the standout defensive end. By the time the Price staff was in place, it was too late to attract Stephenson, who first committed to Florida, then signed with Notre Dame.

This year there are three notable cases where there are family ties involved with present high school recruits. Justin Britt is the brother of current Tide players Wesley and Taylor Britt; Simeon Castille is the son of former Tide All-America Jeremiah Castille and the brother of Bama signee Tim Castille; and Tyrone King, Jr., is the son of former Tide defensive back Tyrone King, who died recently from cancer.

Justin Britt is a 6-4, 255-pound defensive lineman from Cullman High School. He has been timed at 4.8 seconds in the 40-yard dash. Simeon Castille, 6-1, 185, 4.45, is a cornerback at Briarwood Christian High School in Birmingham; and Tyrone King, Jr., 5-10, 183, 4.46, is a cornerback at Minor High School in Adamsville.

The three share more than a Bama family background. They are among the top high school prospects in the state of Alabama this year, and for reasons that have more to do with their accomplishments than their genealogy. Each has worked very hard to reach this level.

Castille has been described as an intense player who plays smart, loves to hit, and is a big-play man. Castille finished his junior campaign with 107 tackles, 3 interceptions, 11 pass breakups, and 3 caused fumbles. He has 10 interceptions for his career entering his senior year.

King is known as a physical, aggressive cornerback adept at man-to-man coverage. He had a superb junior year with 52 tackles and seven interceptions and has 17 career interceptions entering his senior year. He began his prep career as a freshman at Bottenville Junior High and had five interceptions. His sophomore year he started for Minor and showed he belongs with five interceptions in his first full varsity season.

Britt is an emotional player who plays with controlled aggression "and never takes a play off." As is often the case among siblings, there is sentiment that the youngest is the best, although certainly older brother Wesley, a pre-season All-America offensive tackle at Alabama, will be hard to overtake. Justin burst on the scene as a freshman linebacker who turned in 120 tackles. As a sophomore he had 145 tackles (90 solo) and added two interceptions, one of which he returned for a touchdown. Last season he totalled 110 tackles (70 solo) with 16 tackles for losses while splitting time at linebacker and defensive

Justin Britt

Simeon Castille

Tyrone King, Jr.

end. He has 375 tackles in his first three seasons. He is also a capable tight end on offense.

Each of these young men have set high standards for their senior seasons. Justin Britt, who is recognized for his leadership, wants a state championship. Tyrone King wants to improve his game in hopes of gaining a division one scholarship. Simeon Castille wants to win a state championship, but on an individual level admits he would like to win the title of Alabama's Mr. Football.

Castille is quick to acknowledge the advantage he has in coming from a very athletic family. "I learned everything about the secondary from my father (Jeremiah Castille)," Simeon said. "He taught me techniques in coverage, plus he also instilled in me the ability to forget mistakes and move on to the next play; the most important play is the next play. My brother, Tim, is the hardest worker I have been around. Regardless of how good he is, he always wants to get better. His work ethic has driven me to work harder and make myself a better player."

King is cut from the same cloth as his father and he said the thing his father taught him "was always work hard to be the best you can be, to never settle for second best, and to be a fighter." His father, Tyrone King, was an over-achiever under Coach Paul Bryant at Alabama.

Britt has had the luxury of watching two brothers, Wesley (Alabama) and Taylor (UAB, Alabama) go through the recruiting process. The family connection has also taught him a great deal of how to improve his game at the high school level and prepare him for his entrance into college. "My brothers have taught me a lot of techniques that are tough for them to block at the college level," he said. He added they stress the importance of being a team leader.

It is not a surprise that each includes a family member as his football role model–Castille and King listing their fathers, Britt naming brother Wesley.

When a player becomes a prospect he also becomes the focus of all the opposing teams he will face in his senior season. Pressure comes with the territory, including recruiting pressure. Being the brother and/or son of a college football star adds to the burden. Despite all the honors, interviews, and recruiting attention these three young men have received, each displays a maturity that indicates he is coping well.

Indeed, they relish the roles. King said being ranked with the top players in the state "makes me feel great, but it also pushes my drive button to further reach my goal of being rated among the nation's best cornerbacks."

Britt said "I feel like I'm one of the best defensive linemen in the nation. I want it that way, even though it is more pressure." His junior year he had the opportunity to go head to head with a top in-state lineman. Justin was the easy winner in that battle of top players and he has gained national recognition as the videotape of that game has made the rounds of recruiting coordinators.

Castille said, "Being considered among the state's best makes me feel real good. It shows that all the summer workout hours that my dad has put me through are paying dividends."

So what does each of these young men bring to the table that makes them so appealing?

Simeon Castille is already a full qualifier (3.0 GPA, 22 ACT). He benches 265, squats 330, and has a 34-inch vertical jump. He was all-state as a junior. He lists Alabama, LSU, Georgia, Notre Dame, and Miami as his top five. Although he will almost certainly play on defense in college, last year in limited offensive duty he caught six passes for 86 yards and two scores.

Justin Britt was his team's Defensive MVP who made honorable mention all-state. He carries an 89 average in the classroom. He benches 320, squats 435, and sports a 30-inch vertical jump. He has camped at Florida State, Georgia, Alabama, and Tennessee. He lists his top five schools as Alabama, Georgia, LSU, Florida, and Tennessee.

Tyrone King was an honorable mention all-state selection who has camped at MTSU and the Nike camp at Auburn. He has a 32-inch vertical jump in addition to benching 285, squatting 450, and power cleaning 245. He has a 3.0 overall GPA. He lists Alabama, Tennessee, Florida State, Florida, and Michigan.

Britt said, "I am looking for a program where I can get early playing time. I am also seeking a school where I feel comfortable and I get to play the position I love."

King said his criteria for selecting a school included "getting a good education, a coaching staff that makes me feel wanted, an overall good sports program, and good campus life."

Castille said he is "looking at education first, then if the school has a winning program, and a coaching staff that is involved in the players' lives on a daily basis."

The decision of which college to attend is important to everyone, and our trio of "Family Ties" football prospects is no exception. And like other students, they are likely to seek the advice of those they trust.

Castille says he will "do a lot of praying" and he will talk with his father extensively before making a commitment some time after his senior year is complete. The end of his senior football season seems to fit appropriately for Justin Britt as well for he says "I will know when the time is right but it will likely be after my senior year. Through God in my heart, I know he will lead me in the right direction on my decision." Tyrone King, who had hoped his father would live to see him as a college player, said he will consult with his mother and his coach.

It's too early to say where the three will end up, or even if they will all be together in college. But if they are, it will be a fortunate school and team. Just as their family members who preceded them at Alabama, all are quality players and young men.

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RECRUITING

Here's a look at the "Best of the Rest" Alabama prep football prospects

by Freddie Kirby

Last year the big names in Alabama high school football recruiting seemed to be primarily skill position players. This year it is the predominantly big men who are the objects of the recruiters' eyes, although that doesn't mean there are not some outstanding skill position prospects, too. In addition to defensive lineman Justin Britt of Cullman, defensive back Simeon Castille of Briarwood Christian in Birmingham, and defensive back Tyrone King, Jr., of Minor in Adamsville (see Page 86), here is an alphabetical look at some of the top prospects in Alabama high schools this fall:

Tony Bell is a 6-3, 210, (timed at 4.5 seconds in the 40-yard dash) linebacker from Thompson in Alabaster. He also excels in pass coverage, no surprise since he was an all-state safety as a sophomore. He repeated as all-state as a junior after registering nearly 100 tackles, five sacks, and three interceptions. He is a rover type linebacker as a college prospect. He is an outstanding track sprinter. He plays linebacker, backup runningback, and kickoff returner (one touchdown). He benches 270 (5 reps), squats 415, and sports a 37-inch vertical jump. He has a 3.0 GPA and scored 17 on the ACT. He lists his top four as Tennessee, Auburn, Georgia, and LSU. Alabama, Colorado, Ole Miss, and Vanderbilt round out his interest.

David Brown is a 6-3, 260, 4.87 defensive end from Bob Jones in Madison. He has lived throughout the United States and in two foreign countries due to his father being an Army colonel. (He was born in North Carolina, moved to Kansas, then to Indiana, and then overseas to Korea. He reappeared in the United States in Ohio, before moving to Ontario, Canada, and then to Alabama.) He came to Alabama as a 6-0, 180 freshman and has developed himself into a wide body. He made all-metro and all-region as a junior after producing 85 tackles, 12 tackles for loss, and eight sacks from his defensive end position. He will split time as a senior by playing defensive tackle on running downs and moving out to defensive end on passing downs. He benches 320 and squats 550. He has a 3.9 GPA and scored 23 on the ACT. He has major interest in Alabama, Auburn, Stanford, Notre Dame, and Georgia Tech. He has offers from those five plus South Carolina, Vanderbilt, LSU, Mississippi State, Georgia, and Louisville.

Antoine Caldwell is a 6-4, 265, 4.9 offensive guard from Robert E. Lee in Montgomery. An intense offensive guard who has long arms and is a very effective pass blocker. He is a highly intelligent offensive guard who is agile enough to be a great pulling guard at the college level. He graded 85 per cent blocking efficiency as a junior and only gave up one sack. He is working to increase his weightroom performance. He benches 255, squats 470, and power cleans 225. He is projected to grow into a 6-5, 290 offensive lineman. He has a 3.2 GPA and has a 21 on the ACT. He is interested in Alabama, Auburn, LSU, Arkansas, UAB, Louisville, Southern Miss, and Tennessee.

Marcus Carter is a 6-0, 186, 4.5 strong safety from Fort Payne. He finished in the top three on his team in tackles with 70 and also posted three interceptions. He doubles as a fullback where he racked up 742 yards on 110 carries (6.7 yards per carry) with eight touchdowns. He also had one kickoff and one punt return score. He benches 250 and squats 450. He has a 3.3 GPA and a 17 ACT. He has announced he will sign with Auburn.

Michael Darden is a 6-3, 215, 4.7 quarterback from Albertville. An all-region and honorable mention all-state selection, he completed 61 per cent of his passes enroute to amassing nearly 2,500 yards and 23 touchdowns last year. He rushed for another 500 yards and seven scores. He is a dropback passer. He benches 330 and squats 405. He has a 4.0 GPA and scored 20 on the ACT. He has shown interest in Auburn, Alabama, Georgia, Ole Miss, and Southern Miss.

Cody Davis is a 6-7, 265, 5.0 offensive tackle from Tuscaloosa Hillcrest. He played tight end as a sophomore and had a solid year. He moved to left offensive tackle as a junior and that is when he started to maximize his game. He graded 86 per cent blocking efficiency as a junior. His father, Bert Davis, and two uncles, Butch and Bryant Davis, all played college ball at Wichita State. Butch (not the Cleveland Browns coach) also played pro ball with the Denver Broncos and Miami Dolphins. Cody was All-West Alabama and honorable mention all-state. He sports a 28-inch vertical jump, benches 315, squats 500, and hang cleans 315. He has a 2.6 GPA and has made a 16 on the ACT. He favors Alabama, Florida, Ole Miss, Mississippi State, South Carolina, and Auburn.

Drew Davis is a 6-7, 285, 5.5 offensive tackle from Sparta Academy in Evergreen. He is an AISA all-state selection who graded at 90 per cent blocking efficiency as a junior. He also is a starter on the defensive front and had 44 tackles and five sacks. He benches just 250 so he will have to get stronger. He has scored 18 on the ACT. He lists Alabama (leader), Arkansas, Auburn, Florida, and Ole Miss as his favorites.

Trent Davidson is a 6-6, 242, 4.66 tight end from T. R. Miller in Brewton. He is a National Honor Society member who has a 3.4 GPA and 24 ACT. He finished his junior year with 15 receptions for 210 yards and two touchdowns (one in the state championship game) on a state championship team that predominantly runs the ball. He was credited with 26 pancake blocks and he is an outstanding reach blocker on outside sweeps. He is also a long snapper on punts, field goals, and PATs. He was honorable mention all-state. He can bench press 270. He is considering in-state schools, Alabama, Auburn, UAB, and Troy State.

Curtis Dawson is a 6-1, 255, 4.7 inside linebacker from Hoover in Birmingham. His coach, Rush Propst, said, "He is the most dominant high school player that I have coached, and that includes Antwan Odom (Alabama)." He prefers inside linebacker, but is talented enough to play outside and is an excellent pass-rusher. He finished his junior campaign with 145 tackles and nine sacks en route to making all-metro and honorable mention all-state. He benches 400, squats 540, and power cleans 320. He has a 2.4 GPA. He has interest in Alabama, Auburn, Tennessee, Georgia, Ole Miss, and Mississippi State.

Tony Dixon is a 5-10, 185, 4.45 runningback from Parrish in Jasper. As a junior he rushed for 1,833 yards and eight touchdowns despite missing four games with mononucleosis. He enters his senior year with over 6,000 yards rushing. He had over 400 yards as an eighth grader in three games, then followed his freshman year with 1,700 yards. He has a breakout sophomore year with 2,100 yards and 23 touchdowns. He plays cornerback on defense and was credited with 115 tackles and one interception his junior year. He is a two time all-state performer. He benches 275, squats 425, power cleans 250, and deadlifts 500. He carries a 3.3 GPA. He has verbally committed to Kentucky.

Maurice Dupree is a 5-11, 175, 4.4 wide receiver from Cherokee County in Centre. He has a 10.5 hundred meters time, sure hands, and an eye-popping 42-inch vertical jump. He is particularly effective in adding yards after the catch. He caught 39 passes for 639 yards (16.4 yards per catch) and 10 touchdowns last year. He had 14 overall scores including one kickoff return, one punt return, and two rushing touchdowns. He was all-state. He is also an established point guard in basketball who averaged 23.9 points per game, five assists, and six rebounds. He benches 255 and squats 450. He sports a 3.4 GPA and 17 ACT. He will likely choose between Alabama and Auburn, but also has offers from South Carolina, Mississippi State, and MTSU.

Jeff Farr is a 6-3, 300, 5.4 offensive guard from Pell City. A powerful two way lineman who has been the anchor on his team's front wall since his freshman year, he has played defensive tackle, offensive guard, and offensive tackle and could play center in college. He began his varsity career as a freshman defensive tackle, but he became a two way starter as a sophomore. His junior year, he moved to offensive tackle. He is a powerful run blocker who has developed his pass blocking skills. He was all-state. He has camped at Alabama every year since 1998. He has a 23-inch vertical jump, benches 360, and squats 450. He has a 3.0 GPA and has scored 17 on the ACT. He lists Alabama (favorite), Auburn, and LSU.

Cody Greene is a 6-6, 300, 5.3 offensive tackle from Cullman. He played

last year at Oneonta. He was expected to be a prospect this year, and he has obviously worked hard on his skills. At the Florida football camp he was ranked among the top six offensive linemen. He says working against Justin Britt in off-season workouts has helped him. He is actually considered a better pass blocker than run blocker. He earned all-state honors as a junior. He has a 24-inch vertical jump, benches 345, squats 520, and power cleans 305. He has an 80 average in school. He lists his top five as Florida, Alabama, Auburn, Arkansas, and Tennessee and has an offer from Arkansas.

Kevin Hamilton is a 6-3, 250, 4.88 defensive end from Prattville. He is a pass-rushing defensive end who will amass more bulk in college. He finished his junior year with 56 tackles, eight tackles for loss, eight sacks, four caused fumbles, and one interception. He is a three-year starter who made all-county and all-region as a junior. He is projected to grow to 280 and become a defensive tackle. He benches 265, squats 395, and power cleans 245. He has a 2.5 GPA and must raise a low ACT score. He is interested in Arkansas, Ole Miss, Clemson, Louisville, Auburn, Mississippi State, and Alabama.

Chevis Jackson is a 6-1, 180, 4.5 wide receiver from St. Paul's in Mobile. He had 45 receptions for 850 yards and nine touchdowns as a junior. He also returned 16 kickoffs for 415 yards, an average of 25.9 yards per return. He had 13 punt returns for 80 yards, a 6.2 yard average. Defensively, he had 39 tackles, four caused fumbles, and two interceptions. He was all-state. LSU and Alabama are his leaders. He is also considering South Carolina, Arkansas, and Louisville. He benches 255 and squats 365. He has a 2.3 GPA and 19 ACT.

Aaron Johns is a 5-10, 182, 4.5 runningback/ slotback from Thomasville. He shared the backfield with two teammates, played part of the year with a fractured hand, and still managed 1,113 yards rushing. His coach, Jack Hankins, Jr., said, "He is a hard worker, he has great hips, plus he is more electrifying and physically stronger than our previous two stars, Anthony Madison and Chris Felder (both at Alabama)." He was all-region at cornerback. He posted 55 tackles and snagged two interceptions. He benches 260, squats 405, and power cleans 270. He has committed to Alabama over the likes of Georgia Tech, Louisville, and Southern Miss.

Adrian Kindred is a 6-2, 200, 4.4 free safety from Opelika. He is a vicious hitter who tallied 66 tackles, one tackle for loss, four quarterback pressures, two fumble recoveries, and 12 pass deflections. His mother is an Alabama graduate, his father attended Troy State, and his cousin, Lamarcus Rowell, is playing at Auburn. He has a 36-inch vertical jump, benches 255, has a 3.5 GPA, and has scored 17 on the ACT. He lists his top five as Auburn, Alabama (offer), Florida State, LSU, and Georgia.

Ezekial Knight is a 6-3, 210, 4.6 wide receiver/outside linebacker from Randolph County in Wedowee. Although he played wide receiver as a sophomore, he was not yet an accomplished player. As a junior, though, he caught 31 passes for 788 yards and nine touchdowns. He is also a good kick return man who had a combined 700 yards and six touchdowns on punts and kickoffs. He benches 240 and squats 425. He has a 3.2 GPA and 16 ACT. He lists Alabama, Auburn, Virginia Tech, Louisville, Georgia Tech, MTSU, and Troy State.

Dusty Lindsey is a 6-4, 216, 4.65 inside linebacker from Mobile Davidson. The Mobile Region 6A Linebacker of the Year as a junior led the Port City with 152 tackles. He had 19 sacks, 35 hurries, three interceptions, and six fumble recoveries in addition to his tackles. He and his twin brother, Jordin, according to Coach Glenn Vickery, never take a play off. He said, "They go full speed on every play whether it is in a game or in practice." Dusty was all-state as a junior. He is also a stellar baseball player who led the Mobile area with nine home runs and batted .383. He benches 320, squats 415, power cleans 310, and deadlifts 505. He has a 2.6 GPA and has scored 17 on the ACT. His list has Alabama, Auburn, LSU, and Mississippi State.

Jordin Lindsey is a 6-3, 225, 4.65 inside linebacker from Mobile Davidson. An all-region performer who finished his junior year just five tackles shy of his twin brother, Dusty, he posted 147 tackles, six sacks, and four fumble recoveries as a junior. The twins' grandfather, Vernon Lindsey, played in the NFL for the Philadelphia Eagles in the 1970s. Jordin is also a baseball standout who batted .486 with seven home runs as a junior. He benches 335, squats 415, power cleans 265, and deadlifts 480. He posts a 2.7 GPA and has scored 18 on the ACT. He lists Alabama, Auburn, LSU, and Mississippi State.

Jonathan Lyons is a 6-3, 298, 5.4 offensive tackle from McGill-Toolen in Mobile. He was honorable mention all-state as a junior. He has given up just two sacks in his career, both in his sophomore year. He graded 94 per cent in blocking efficiency last year. He has a 24-inch vertical jump with a 300 bench press, 455 squat, and 275 power clean. He has a 3.2 GPA and has made 19 on the ACT. He lists his favorites as Alabama, LSU, Auburn, Georgia, and Florida State.

JeBron Manson is a 5-10, 215, 4.55 outside linebacker from Tuscaloosa Hillcrest. He is a four-year starter who doesn't get the attention of his taller teammates, but he may have more grit and determination than anyone on the team. His freshman year he showed that he was more than capable of handling the duties of an outside linebacker. He posted 48 tackles his freshman year then had 110 tackles as a sophomore. Last year he had 93 tackles and two interceptions. He has a huge heart and he puts his pride on the line in every game. He is the cousin of Markus Manson the star running back on his team and he also is his backup. His junior year he gained 136 yards and four touchdowns in mostly red zone carries. He has a 33-inch vertical jump, a 2.5 core GPA, and a 17 ACT. He benches 375, squats 550, and power cleans 335. He has offers on the table from Michigan State and Oregon State and is also looking at Alabama, Auburn, Arkansas, Ole Miss, Mississippi State, and Southern Miss.

Markus Manson is a 6-1, 190, 4.37 runningback from Tuscaloosa Hillcrest. He had an injury-plagued sophomore year and wound up with just 500 yards rushing. He did return two kickoffs for scores as a sophomore. He bounced back his junior year as he rushed for 1,906 yards and 19 touchdowns. He amassed around 2,500 yards of total offense with 20 scores. He was all-state. He has a 39-inch vertical jump, he won the indoor Class 6A long jump championship with a leap of 22-1, and he won the 55-meter championship (6.52). He registered a 4.01 20-yard shuttle time at the Nike Camp in Auburn. He benches 330, squats 500, and power cleans 280. He has a 3.3 GPA. He is looking at Michigan, Alabama, Auburn, Michigan State, Notre Dame, Georgia, Colorado, and South Carolina.

Max Martin is a 6-2, 210, 4.6 runningback from Bob Jones in Madison. He rushed 138 times for 1,069 yards (7.7 yards per carry) and nine touchdowns as a junior in just eight games. He also caught five passes for 133 yards and four scores. He is a superb linebacker on defense and many feel he will end up there in college. In five games as a part time linebacker, he racked up 53 tackles and two sacks. He was born in Orlando, Florida and lived there until he was four year old. He lived the next 10 years of his life in Chicago before moving to Madison as a high school freshman. He benches 315 and squats 385. He has a 2.5 GPA and scored 24 on the ACT. He has committed to Michigan.

Cole Mason is a 6-2, 230, 4.7 fullback from Parrish in Jasper. He accounted for 1,789 yards rushing as a junior with 24 touchdowns, plus had 197 yards and eight touchdowns receiving. As a junior he transferred to Parrish from Oakman. He doubles as a linebacker and had 115 tackles and 19 sacks. He benches 390, squats 505, and deadlifts 600. He has a 2.8 GPA. He committed to Kentucky.

Travis McCall is a 6-3, 230, 4.7 tight end from Prattville. He plays in a Wing-T offense that doesn't get him the ball very often, but he is a blocking dynamo who his coach calls "the best tight end I have ever seen." He graded 90 per cent blocking efficiency from the tight end position, but caught just two passes as a junior. He played last season with a broken hand. He had six touchdown receptions as a sophomore. He has a 2.5 GPA and an 18 ACT. He benches 250, squats 475, and hang cleans 290. He will choose from the likes of Alabama (leader), Auburn, Clemson, Louisville, and UAB. All five have offered.

Jacquez McKissic is a 6-7, 250, 4.96 defensive end from Opelika. He has played on both offense at tackle and defense at end and some project him as a college tight end. He moved to defensive end for the final six games of 2002 and turned in 32 tackles and eight sacks. He is related to the Lukes of Alabama and Auburn. He has a 32-inch vertical jump, benches 260, squats 395, and hang cleans 265 and must get stronger. He has a 3.0 GPA and 17 ACT. He lists Alabama, Auburn, Iowa, North Carolina State, Southern Miss and Mississippi State.

Brandon Montgomery is a 6-3, 340, 5.0 offensive guard from Hillcrest in Evergreen. He has tremendous strength (bench press 385, squat 585) and he graded 82 per cent blocking efficiency as a junior. He was credited with 88 knockdown blocks. He also lines up at defensive tackle and some believe he will be a defensive lineman. His coach says he registered 106 tackles as a junior. He has a 2.8 GPA. He has early interest in Alabama, Auburn, Ohio State, Ole Miss, and Tennessee.

Chris Nickson is a 6-1, 198, 4.6 quarterback from Pike County in Brundidge. Considered by many to be the state's top quarterback prospect, Chris passed for 2,300 yards and 30 touchdowns as a junior. He also rushed for 600 yards and 12 touchdowns. He was a nominee for the Class 3A Player of the Year his junior season and was all-state. He is very close to former Alabama players Cornelius Griffin and Quincy Jackson from Brundidge.He bench presses 245, squats 395, and power cleans 245. He has a 29-inch vertical jump. He is also a dynamite student who registers a 4.0 GPA and made 18 on the ACT. Alabama is his leader (offered), followed by Auburn, Florida, Florida State, Georgia Tech, Vanderbilt, and Louisville.

Emmanuel Perry is a 6-4, 236, 5.1 defensive tackle from Montgomery Carver. Last season was his first in organized football and he was an effective

inside pass rusher who turned in 65 tackles and 20 sacks. He has a 29-inch vertical jump, benches 385, squats 630, power cleans 275, and deadlifts 405. He has a 2.5 GPA. He lists Auburn, Alabama, Tennessee, FSU, West Virginia, and Mississippi State.

Eric Phillips is a 6-5, 250, 4.8 defensive end/offensive tackle from Wenonah in Birmingham. As a junior he had 50 tackles and three sacks. As good as he is on defense, his future may be at offensive tackle. He wears a size 17 shoe. He benches 300, squats 375, deadlifts 420, and power cleans 250. He has a 2.6 GPA. He has expressed interest in Auburn, Alabama, UAB, Arkansas, and Ole Miss.

Eric Robinson is a 6-1, 186, 4.4 athlete from Montgomery Carver. He played his junior year at Robert E. Lee in Montgomery and had 40 tackles, three interceptions, and three caused fumbles. Most expect him to be a cornerback in college, but some project him as a wide receiver. He has a 39-inch vertical jump, benches 245, squats 405, and power cleans 225. He has a 2.5 GPA. He lists Auburn, Alabama, Iowa, Mississippi, West Virginia, and Southern Miss.

Travis Robinson is a 5-10, 180, 4.35 cornerback from Tuscaloosa Hillcrest. A three-year starter, he finished his junior year with 43 tackles and five interceptions, plus returned a fumble recovery 96 yards for a touchdown against Tuscaloosa Central. He has seven career interceptions. He was clocked at 4.22 at the Nike Camp in Auburn. He registers a 4.02 twenty yard shuttle time and he measured a 38-inch vertical jump. In addition to Nike, he has camped at Clemson, Auburn, and Alabama. He benches 300, squats 455, and power cleans 285. He has a 3.5 GPA and has scored 17 on the ACT. He lists Alabama, Auburn, and LSU as his top three. Clemson, Notre Dame, and Arkansas also show interest. Mississippi State and Vanderbilt have offered.

B.J. Stabler is a 6-5, 291, 5.2 offensive tackle from Clarke County in Grove Hill. He graded 95 per cent on his blocking and he averaged six pancakes per game. He had a game high 13 in one contest. He is very young , just 16, and was named his team's most valuable lineman as a junior. He is considered the top offensive line prospect in Alabama this year by some. He was all-state as a junior. He has excellent lower body strength with a 510 squat, but he needs to work on his upper body; his bench press is 265 and his power clean is 245. He has a 3.0 GPA and has scored 16 on the ACT. He has offers from his top four of Auburn, Alabama, LSU, and South Carolina.

Nikita Stover is a 6-1, 188, 4.45 wide receiver from Hartselle. He has already been named the state's top prospect by some after he was the region Athlete of the Year as a junior. Last year he had 26 catches for 723 yards (27.8 yards per catch) and 10 touchdowns. He rushed the ball five times for 168 yards and two touchdowns, while he returned two kickoffs for 167 yards and one score. Altogether, he touched the ball 34 times for 1,058 yards (31.1 average) and 13 touchdowns. He averaged a touchdown every 2.6 touches. He also spends some time on defense and he was credited with 43 tackles, seven pass breakups, and two interceptions as a junior. He posted seven interceptions as a freshman and five as a sophomore. He has a 39-inch vertical jump. He is a four-year starter in football, but he also excels in basketball and track. He is the Class 5A state champion in the high jump with a leap of 6-6, but 6-8 is his personal best. He benches 260, squats 450, and power cleans 245. He has a 2.3 GPA and scored 17 on the ACT. Bama leads LSU, Michigan, South Carolina, and Arkansas.

Brandon Suggs is a 6-2, 252, 4.8 defensive end from Russellville. As a junior he had 72 tackles, 11 sacks, eight tackles for loss, and three fumble recoveries (one returned 25 yards for a touchdown). He doubles as a goal line tight end and he grabbed two touchdowns as a junior. He has added 25 pounds of muscle during the off season and many feel he can reach 280 and become a defensive tackle in college. He benches 285, squats 465, and power cleans 265. He has work to do academically. He is getting early looks from Alabama, Auburn, Ole Miss, and Mississippi State.

Nick Walker is a 6-5, 235, 4.83 tight end from Pike County in Brundidge. An all-state selection, he had a banner year as both a receiver and blocker. He has the luxury of playing with one of the state's best quarterbacks (Chris Nickson) and he has shown an ability to get open on fade routes, seam routes, and stop patterns. As a junior he collected 37 catches for over 800 yards and 10 touchdowns. He benches 245, squats 405, and power cleans 250. He has a 3.2 GPA. He has early interest in Alabama, Auburn, Florida, and Florida State.

John Watts is a 6-7, 261, 5.0 offensive tackle from Russellville. He projects to grow into a 300-pounder. He toiled in the shadows of all everything, Aaron Sears (Tennessee) as a junior. He was second on his team a year ago to Sears in blocking (graded over 85 per cent) and he finished just behind Sears in sacks allowed (Sears one sack allowed, one pressure, Watts just four sacks allowed) as a junior. He was all-state. He benches 275, squats 405, and power cleans 245. He has a 3.1 GPA and has made 15 on the ACT. He lists his early favorites as Auburn, Alabama, LSU, Ole Miss, and Florida. He has offers already from Mississippi State, Vanderbilt, Memphis, and UAB.

Patrick White is a 6-2, 180, 4.35 athletic quarterback from Daphne. He accounted for 1,600 yards and 18 touchdowns as a junior quarterback. He wants to get a shot at quarterback but he is open to playing wide receiver or free safety. He rushed for 1,100 yards and 16 touchdowns as a junior and passed for 500 yards and two additional scores. His coach calls him "a pure athlete who can take it the distance on every play. He had five touchdown runs over 90 yards as a junior, he's explosive." He was honorable mention all-state. He is also a quality baseball prospect who is being scouted by pro teams. His speed is the driving force behind his exposure in football and baseball. He has been clocked at 6.37 for 60 yards. He benches 255, squats 415, and power cleans 255. He is academically set with a 3.0 GPA and a 20 ACT. His brother, James White, is playing at West Liberty in West Virginia. He is looking at Colorado, Alabama, Mississippi State, Auburn, West Virginia, Clemson, and Ole Miss.

John Parker Wilson, 6-2, 185, 4.5, is a quarterback from Hoover. The field leader for the defending Class 6A State Champions in Alabama, he is calm under pressure, has a strong arm, and is very accurate on his passes. He is a two sport gem who will receive scholarship offers in both football and baseball. He was honorable mention all-state as a junior after passing for 2,800 yards and 27 touchdowns against just 10 picks. On the diamond he was 8-1 on the mound while batting .300 with five homers. His dad, Parker Wilson, played baseball at Livingston University and in the minor leagues for the Boston Red Sox. He has a 31-inch vertical jump, benches 220, and squats 350. He sports a 3.5 GPA and scored 24 on the ACT. He has offers from Clemson, Georgia Tech (baseball also), Duke, and MTSU. He also lists Alabama, Auburn, Ole Miss, North Carolina State, and Central Florida.

As always, there will certainly be others who move into the top echelon of prospects. Here are some who could surface during the season.

Offensive tackle Chester Adams, 6-4, 325, 5.4, Luverne; quarterback Jacary Atkinson, 6-2, 180, 4.75, Valley; fullback Chris Barnett, 6-0, 210, 4.6, Mobile McGill-Toolen; offensive guard Andrew Black, 6-4, 300, 5.3, Huntsville Grissom; wide receiver Eric Bogan, 5-10, 180, 4.5, Alabaster Thompson; offensive guard Jason Bosley, 6-4, 280, Huntsville Grissom; linebacker Titus Brown, 6-2, 220, 4.6, Tuscaloosa Hillcrest; running back Courtney Cain, 5-10, 180, 4.4, Athens; running back Maurice Calhoun, 5-9, 180, 4.4, Mary Montgomery of Semmes; running back Rhoderick Carroll, 6-0, 200, 4.5, Autaugaville; athlete Dietrick Causey, 6-2, 195, 4.6, Silas Southern Choctaw; offensive guard T.J. Claud, 6-2, 265, 5.2, Birmingham Briarwood Christian; quarterback Joe Craddock, 5-10, 175, 4.6, Birmingham Briarwood Christian; linebacker Larico Crumpton, 6-4, 210, 4.6, Columbiana Shelby County; wide receiver Elijah Daniel, 6-0, 175, 4.5, Brundidge Pike County; nose guard Titus Daniels, 5-11, 265, 4.85, Prattville; running back A.J. Davis, 5-11, 205, 4.45, Gardendale;

Cornerback Kendrick Davis, 5-9, 190, 4.4, Tuscaloosa Hillcrest; defensive end Selby Davis, 6-3, 245, 4.7, Montgomery Trinity Presbyterian; wide receiver Roderick Doss, 6-1, 175, 4.6, Athens; fullback Julius Dulaney, 5-11, 232, 4.7, Highland Home; defensive tackle Jeremy East, 6-2, 260, 5.0, Ashland Clay County; offensive guard Nathan Farrow, 6-3, 275, 5.2, Birmingham Clay-Chalkville; cornerback Eric Fletcher, 6-1, 170, 4.55, Harvest Sparkman; cornerback Mike Ford, 6-1, 170, 4.5, Huntsville Johnson; wide receiver Derrick Frith, 5-10, 160, 4.5, Arley Meek; defensive tackle James Galloway, 6-2, 275, 5.0, Phenix City Central; athlete Brian Glenn, 5-11, 180, 4.5, Ashland Clay County; cornerback James Goude, 5-11, 175, 4.5, Montgomery Macon East; cornerback Jeremy Gray, 6-2, 185, 4.5, Opelika; running back Ty Griswold, 5-10, 205, 4.68, Prattville; linebacker Kris Guyton, 6-3, 210, 4.58, Tuscaloosa Hillcrest; safety B.T. Hartloge, 5-11, 182, 4.6, Birmingham Hoover;

Running back Trent Hetherington, 5-10, 175, 4.4, Wetumpka; defensive end Jeremie Holifield, 6-5, 235, 4.6, Hoover; defensive end Brian Hollimon, 6-5, 210, 4.7, Hillsboro East Lawrence; defensive end Matt Jackson, 6-2, 230, 4.7, Hoover; offensive guard Jonathan Javine, 6-3, 315, 5.3, Tuscaloosa Central; center Al Jefferson, 6-2, 290, 5.2, Mobile Davidson; offensive guard Allen Johnson, 6-3, 280, 5.2, Mobile Murphy; offensive guard Alphonso Johnson, 6-1, 290, 5.2, Montgomery Jeff Davis; linebacker Jazz Johnson, 6-2, 245, 4.7, Gadsden Litchfield; cornerback Merrill Johnson, 5-11, 185, 4.55, Butler Choctaw County; defensive tackle Aaron Jones, 6-0, 250, 4.8, Russellville; linebacker Andrew Jones, 5-11, 220, 4.5, Adamsville Minor; wide receiver Eric Jones, 5-9, 175, Mobile Davidson; offensive guard Antonio Kelly, 6-3, 300, 5.5, Brundidge Pike County; tight end Harlan Kennedy, 6-6, 250, 4.8, Huntsville Grissom; running back Rashad Langford, 6-2, 185, 4.45, Athens Tanner;

Linebacker Harvey Logan, 6-0, 245, 4.75, Tuscaloosa Central; quarterback Davis Manning, 6-4, 200, 4.75, Huntsville Grissom; defensive end Andrew

McCain, 6-5, 230, 4.9, Birmingham Briarwood Christian; offensive guard Nathan McCall, 6-2, 280, 5.4, Dothan; athlete Darius McClure, 5-11, 178, 4.5, Adamsville Minor; running back Aaron McDaniel, 6-1, 170, 4.5, Fort Payne; quick tackle Rick Miller, 6-5, 290, 5.3, Dadeville; cornerback Mike Mitchell, 5-8, 165, 4.5, Prattville; offensive guard Brandon Nix, 6-4, 270, 4.9, Harpersville Coosa Valley Central; defensive tackle Philip Nola, 6-4, 260, 4.9, Birmingham Spain Park; punter Josh Post, 5-11, 190, 4.75, Troy Henderson; offensive tackle Reginald Powe, 6-8, 325, 5.4, Mobile Murphy; offensive tackle Robert Reyes, 6-6, 280, 5.2, Mobile Shaw; defensive tackle Anterrio Rodgers, 6-3, 275, 4.9, Brundidge Pike County; cornerback Blake Shrader, 5-11, 180, 4.45, Stevenson North Jackson; running back Jamie Simpson, 5-11, 190, 4.45, Evergreen Hillcrest; running back T.J. Slaughter, 5-10, 185, Adamsville Minor;

Offensive tackle Jason Smiley, 6-5, 250, 4.9, Troy Henderson; offensive guard Jordan Smith, 6-4, 260, 5.2, Jemison; fullback Josh Smyth, 6-0, 235, 4.75, Hoover; running back Brandon Thornton, 5-10, 185, 4.5, Homewood; defensive end Wilton Triggs, 6-4, 200, 4.6, Huntsville Butler; offensive tackle Cody Turner, 6-5, 340, 5.5, Flomaton; linebacker Caleb Wade, 5-11, 220, 4.65, Birmingham Clay-Chalkville; wide receiver Martin Warren, 5-11, 165, 4.6, Decatur Austin; defensive end Mitchell Waters, 6-5, 230, 4.7, Montgomery Trinity Presbyterian; offensive tackle Adam Weaver, 6-6, 255, 5.2, Cedar Bluff; offensive guard Nathan Webb, 6-2, 255, 5.2, Stevenson North Jackson; cornerback Phillip Williams, 6-2, 180, 4.6, Arley Meek; and linebacker Jake Wingo, 6-0, 205, 4.5, Tuscaloosa Hillcrest.

by the staff of BamaMag.com

Jordan Reever, QB, 6-2,185,4.60, Garland, TX - South Garland
Blake Barnes, QB, 6-3,215,4.70, Baldwyn, MS
Micah Brown, QB, 6-1,185,4.55, Tampa, FL - Blake
Connor Wise, QB, 6-5,200,4.80, Columbus, MS - Heritage Academy
Corey Russell, QB, 6-3,180,4.70, Speedwell, TN - Powell Valley
Devin Gardner, QB, 6-5,230,4.80, West Memphis, AR - West Memphis Christian
Joel Harvin, QB, 6-3,180,4.60, Blakely, GA - Early County
Pat Farrell, QB, 6-3,220,4.90, Long Beach, MS
Alex Mortensen, QB, 6-2,180,4.72, Fairburn, GA - Landmark Christian
Adam Thrash, QB, 6-5,220,4.80, Little Rock, AR - Pulaski Academy
Ryan Karl, RB, 6-0,205,4.52, Franklin, TN - Battle Ground Academy
Patrick Ealy, RB, 5-9,190, Denver, CO - South HS
Shamarrick Webster, RB, 5-8,165,4.60, Ackerman, MS
Antonio Miner, RB, 5-11,199,4.55, Jackson, MS - Jim Hill
D.J. Hall, WR, 6-3, 183, 4.37, Fort Walton, FL - Choctawhatchee
R.J. Sumrall, WR, 6-0,180,4.65, Winter Park, FL
Antonio McCoy, WR, 6-1,165,4.50, Starkville, MS
Greg Carr, WR, 6-5,185,4.40, Citra, FL - North Marion
Marcus McClinton, WR, 6-2,201, Fort Campbell, KY
Andre Garth, WR, 6-4,200,4.60, Amory, MS
Casey Carpenter, WR, 6-1,190,4.50, Jackson, TN - Jackson Christian
Joe McLemore, WR, 5-11,170,4.50, Newton, TX
Dudley Swoope, TE, 6-6,215,4.80, Columbus, MS - Heritage Academy
William Davis, OL, 6-4,295,5.40, Corinth, MS
Trey Tonsing, OL, 6-4,260,4.90, Waldorf, MD - Westlake
Lance Lee, OL, 6-6,252,5.1, Oxford, MS
Jim Tartt, OL, 6-3,315,5.40, Crawfordville, FL - Wakulla
Eddie Matthews, OL, 6-3,275,5.5, Douglasville, GA - Douglas County
Keyon Harris, OL, 6-3,320,5.00, Waynesboro, MS - Wayne County
John Hafferty, OL, 6-3,290,4.90, Alpharetta, GA - Chattahoochee
Josh Winchell, OL, 6-5,310,5.00, Southaven, MS
Blake Slates, OL, 6-3,260,5.3, Lexington, KY - Dunbar
Max Holmes, OL, 6-4,275,5.30, Baton Rouge, LA - Parkview Baptist
Matt Boss, OL, 6-5,300,5.00 , Cherryvale, KS
Lorenzo Washington, DT, 6-5,275,4.75, Loganville, GA - Grayson
Frank Morton, DT, 6-4,280,4.90, Decatur, GA - Southwest Dekalb
Nick Butler, DT, 6-2,260,5.00, Warner Robins, GA
Colby Brister, DE, 6-3,230,4.82, Columbus, MS - New Hope
Brandon Lang, DE, 6-5,220,4.50, Tucker, GA
Calais Campbell, DE, 6-8,230,4.8, Denver, CO - South
Jonathan Patton, DE, 6-5,240,4.70, Chicago, IL - Hubbard
Tyler Phillips, LB, 6-1,220,4.70, Cumming, GA - South Forsyth
Andrew McKain, LB, 6-1,220,4.65, Tucker, GA
Thomas Bennett, LB, 6-1,215,4.70, Newton, TX
Jon-Erik Richards, LB, 5-11,205,5.10, Salem, OR - Sprague
Heath Grant, LB, 6-2,220,4.70, Starkville, MS
Steve Gandy, S, 6-1,187,4.40, Waynesboro, MS - Wayne County
Zabran Taylor, S, 6-1,180,4.59, Brandon, MS - Brandon
Sergio Villasenor, S, 6-1,200,4.50, Santa Fe Springs, CA - St Paul
Maurice Smith, S, 6-2,175,4.50, Athens, TN - McMinn
Kyle Jackson, S, 6-1,176,4.61, Neptune Beach, FL - Fletcher
Kevin Johnson, CB, 5-9,175,4.40, Greenville, MS - Washington County

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2002 FOOTBALL STATISTICS

Record: 10-3 SEC: 6-2
Tuscaloosa: 4-2 Birmingham: 1-0 Road: 5-1

Date	Opponent	Site	Result (Attendance)
Aug. 31	MTSU	Birmingham	39-34 (80,091)
Sept. 7	Oklahoma	Norman	27-37 (75,564)
Sept. 14	North Texas	Tuscaloosa	33-7 (79,818)
Sept. 21	Southern Miss	Tuscaloosa	20-7 (83,818
Sept. 28	Arkansas	Fayetteville	30-12 (73,551)
Oct. 5	Georgia	Tuscaloosa	25-27 (83,818)
Oct. 19	Mississippi (HC)	Tuscaloosa	42-7 (83,818)
Oct. 26	Tennessee	Knoxville	34-14 (107,722
Nov. 2	Vanderbilt	Nashville	30-8 (36,407)
Nov. 9	Mississippi State	Tuscaloosa	28-14 (83,818)
Nov. 16	LSU	Baton Rouge	31-0 (92,012)
Nov. 23	Auburn	Tuscaloosa	7-17 (84,818)
Nov. 30	Hawaii	Honolulu	21-16 (50,000)

RUSHING	G	No	Net	Gain	Loss	Avg.	TD	LP
S. Williams	13	130	921	952	31	7.3	5	80
Beard	13	165	811	858	47	5.2	12	35
Watts	11	130	356	487	131	2.7	3	17
Hudson	13	49	306	315	9	6.2	1	47
Galloway	4	58	257	281	24	4.4	4	32
McLain	11	19	81	82	1	4.3	0	25
Sanders	13	7	20	20	0	2.9	0	5
Pennington	4	6	20	20	0	3.3	0	6
Fulgham	13	1	18	18	0	18.0	0	18
Luke	13	2	4	5	1	2.5	0	5
Collins	13	1	3	3	0	3.0	0	3
Ward	12	4	1	24	23	0.2	0	24
Croyle	12	38	-2	92	94	-0.1	3	11
Bearden	12	4	-3	23	26	-0.8	1	19
Team	13	5	-15	0	15	-3.0	0	-2

PASSING	G	Att	Comp	HI	Yds	Pct.	TD	LP
Watts	11	181	112	4	1414	61.9%	7	43
Croyle	12	123	60	5	1031	48.8%	5	75
Pennington	4	1	1	0	1	100.0%	0	1
Bearden	12	2	1	0	12	50.0%	0	12
S. Williams	13	1	0	0	0	0.0%	0	0
Team	13	2	0	0	0	0.0%	0	0

PUNTING	G	No	Yds	Avg.	BLK	LP
Bearden	12	52	2106	40.5	1	55
Ziifle	9	8	306	38.2	0	58

RECEIVING	G	No	Yds	Avg.	TD	LP
Collins	13	35	553	15.8	3	64
Fulgham	13	30	505	16.8	3	51
Luke	13	41	482	11.8	2	36
S. Williams	13	21	228	10.9	0	75
Fletcher	13	7	193	27.6	2	56
Clarke	11	7	153	21.9	0	43
Johnston	13	8	83	10.4	0	23
Sanders	13	7	83	11.9	0	28
Beard	13	5	74	14.8	0	35
Hudson	13	3	50	16.7	1	32
Cavan	6	2	27	13.5	1	15
McLain	11	3	10	3.3	0	11
Greer	13	1	10	10.0	0	10
Galloway	4	1	5	5.0	0	5
Ward	12	1	1	1.0	0	1

PUNT RET.	G	No	Yds	Avg.	TD	LP
S. Williams	13	39	340	8.7	0	19
L. Williams	13	1	14	14.0	0	14
Taylor	13	1	8	8.0	1	8
McBride	5	4	8	2.0	0	10

KICKOFF RETURNS	G	No	Yds	Avg.	TD	LP
Hudson	13	13	267	20.5	0	39
Luke	13	10	196	19.6	0	30
S. Williams	13	5	91	18.2	0	28
Cavan	6	1	9	9.0	0	9

SCORING	TD	XP-XPA	FG-FGA	2-PT	TOTAL
Beard	12			0-1	72
Robinson		23-24	6-10		41
Ziifle		12-12	6-10		30
S. Williams	5				30
Galloway	4				24
Bostick		4-5	6-8		22
Fulgham	3			1-1	20
Croyle	3				18
Watts	3			0-1	18
Collins	3				18
Luke	2			1-1	14
Fletcher	2				12
Hudson	2				12
Cavan	1				6
Taylor	1				6
Bearden	1				6
Roach	1				6
Peprah	1				6
Dixon	1				6

TEAM STATISTICS

	U of A	Opponents
TOTAL FIRST DOWNS	250	190
By Rushing	129	64
By Passing	102	102
By Penalty	19	24
TOTAL OFFENSIVE YARDS	5245	3345
Avg. Gain Per Game	403.5	257.3
Total Plays	929	764
Avg. Plays Per Game	71.5	58.8
Avg. Gain Per Play	5.65	4.38
NET YARDS RUSHING	2772	1042
Avg. Gain Per Game	213.2	80.2
Rushing Attempts	619	390
Avg. Gain Per Rush	4.48	2.67
Yards Gained Rushing	3180	1527
Yards Lost Rushing	408	485
NET YARDS PASSING	2473	2303
Avg. Gain Per Game	190.2	177.2
Avg. Gain Per 5.	8.0	6.2
Avg. Gain Per Comp.	14.2	12.4
Attempts	310	374
Completions	174	185
Percentage	56.1	49.5
Had Intercepted	9	18
PASSES INTERCEPTED BY	18	9
Yards Returned	333	148
Average Return	18.5	16.4
PUNTING AVERAGE	40.2	41.1
Number of Punts	60	82
Yards Punted	2412	3374
Had Blocked	2	2
KICKOFFS RETURNED	29	62
Yards Returned	563	1447
Average Return	19.4	23.3
PUNTS RETURNED	45	40
Yards Returned	376	326
Average Return	8.4	8.2
PENALTIES	121	97
Yards Penalized	1024	721
Avg. Yards Per Game	78.8	55.5
FUMBLES-LOST	21-9	36-15
TOUCHDOWNS	45	24
By Rushing	29	10
By Passing	12	11
Other	4	3
FIELD GOALS -ATTEMPTS	18-28	9-13
EXTRA POINTS-ATTEMPTS	41-45	22-24
By Kicking	39-41	19-19
By Passing	1-1	2-2
By Rushing	1-3	1-3
By Defense	0	1
SAFETIES	0	2
TOTAL POINTS	367	200
Avg. Points Per Game	28.2	15.4
POSSESSION DOWNS	219	184
Conversions	84	62
Efficiency %	38.4	33.7

SCORE BY QUARTERS:

	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	OT		Total
ALABAMA	94	87	72	114	N/A	–	367
Opponents	40	67	26	67	N/A	–	200

DEFENSIVE STATISTICS

TACKLES	Primary	Assist	Total	For Loss	Yards
Daniels	68	42	110	11	29
Wortham	52	43	95	4	18
Jones	57	28	85	1	10
Bacon	35	37	72	1	1
Pope	37	28	65	6	28
Roach	37	26	63	7	21
Moorehead	28	26	54	14	84
Johnson	27	27	54	9	56
Peprah	39	8	47	1	1
Dixon	43	4	47	2	6
King	28	18	46	7	22
Odom	27	16	43	14	86
Harper	27	15	42	3	12
Bryant	13	19	32	2	3
Bolden	20	8	28	1	4
Bates	15	13	28	3	16
Childress	10	16	26	1	1
Ryans	13	10	23	2	2
M'Kay-Loescher	14	8	22	7	51
James	10	5	15		
Sanders	12	2	14		
Andrews	7	5	12		
Anderson	7	2	9	3	16
Madison	6	3	9		
Scott	6	2	8		
L. Williams	3	4	7	1	3
Bearden	4	1	5		
James	3	0	3		
Ferguson	2	1	3		
McBride	0	3	3		
S. Williams	2	0	2		
Hudson	1	0	1		
Mathis	1	0	1		
Ridings	1	0	1		
Clarke	1	0	1		
Collins	1	0	1		
Luke	1	0	1		
Ziifle	0	1	1		

INTERCEPTIONS

	G	No.	Yds.	Avg.	TD	LP
Peprah	13	4	90	22.5	1	48
Bacon	13	4	32	8.0	0	30
Jones	13	3	56	18.7	0	30
Bolden	12	2	19	9.5	0	19
Dixon	13	2	10	5.0	0	4
Pope	13	1	61	61.0	0	61
Roach	13	1	41	41.0	1	41
Childress	13	1	24	24.0	0	24

TIME OF POSSESSION BY QUARTERS:

	UofA	Opp.
First	104:10	90:50
Second	97:18	97:42
Third	113:10	81:50
Fourth	118:57	76:03
TOTAL	433:35	346:25

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Miscellaneous Defensive Statistics

FUMBLES CAUSED: Johnson 4, Anderson 2, King 2, Jones 2, Odom 2, Daniels 1, Moorehead 1, Peprah 1, McKay-Loescher 1, Bryant 1, Roach 1, Pope 1, Harper 1

FUMBLES RECOVERED: Bacon 2, James 2, Ryans 1, Bates 1, King 1, Roach 1, Bolden 1, Pope 1, Dixon 1, Harper 1, Odom 1, Bryant 1, Anderson 1

PASSES BROKEN UP: Dixon 10, Bacon 10, Bolden 7, Madison 5, Jones 5, Peprah 5, Jones 3, Roach 2, Bates 2, Pope 2, Andrews 1, Daniels 1, Moorehead 1, Childress 1, Johnson 1, Ferguson 1

QUARTERBACK PRESSURES: Moorehead 13, Odom 10, McKay-Loescher 9, Johnson 6, Roach 2, Wortham 1, Bryant 1, King 1, Harper 1, Bacon 1, Daniels 1, Pope 1

KICKS BLOCKED: Taylor 1 (punt), L. Williams 1 (punt), Bacon 1 (field goal), Odom 2 (2 field goals)

CRIMSON TIDE QUICK FACTS

2003 Alabama Football Coaching Staff

Head Coach: Mike Shula (Alabama, 1987)
College Record: First Year
Assistant Head Coach/Defensive Coordinator/Linebackers: Joe Kines (Jacksonville State, 1967)
Offensive Coordinator/Quarterbacks: Dave Rader (Tulsa, 1980)
Special Teams Coordinator/Tight Ends: Dave Ungerer (Southern Connecticut State, 1980)
Offensive Line: Bobby Connelly (Texas A&M-Commerce, 1994)
Running Backs: Sparky Woods (Carson Newman, 1976)
Wide Receivers: Charlie Harbison (Gardner Webb, 1982)
Defensive Tackles: Buddy Wyatt (Texas Tech, 1989)
Defensive Ends: Paul Randolph (Tennessee-Martin, 1990)
Defensive Backs: Chris Ball (Missouri Western State College, 1986)
Defensive Graduate Assistant: Jason Jones (Alabama, 2001)
Offensive Graduate Assistant: Paul Hogan (Alabama, 2000)

Director of Football Operations: Randy Ross (St. Bernard College, 1975)
Strength & Conditioning: Ben Pollard (Texas Tech, 1984)
Trainer: Rodney Brown (Alabama, 1976)
Equipment Manager: Tank Conerly (Ole Miss, 1980)
Director of High School Relations: Tim Bowens (Alabama, 1999)

OFFENSE

LETTERMEN RETURNING (18)
SE: **Triandos Luke**, Zach Fletcher, Brandon Greer
LT: **Wesley Britt**, *Atlas Herrion
LG: **Justin Smiley**
RG: ***Dennis Alexander**
RT: **Evan Mathis**
TE: David Cavan, Clint Johnston, **Donald Clarke**
QB: Brodie Croyle
TB: **Shaud Williams**, Ray Hudson
FB: **Greg McLain**
FL: **Dre Fulgham**, ***Antonio Carter**, Lance Taylor

LETTERMEN LOST (10)
SE: **Sam Collins**
LT: Lannis Baxley
C: **Alonzo Ephraim**
RG: **Marico Portis**
TE: Theo Sanders
QB: **Tyler Watts**
TB: **Ahmaad Galloway**, Santonio Beard
FL: Joel Babb, Kip Williams

DEFENSE

LETTERMEN RETURNING (18)
LE: **Antwan Odom**, Leslie Williams
LT: Ahmad Childress
NT: Anthony Bryant
RE: **Nautyn McKay-Loescher**, *Mark Anderson
SLB: **Cornelius Wortham**, Demeco Ryans
MLB: **Freddie Roach, Derrick Pope**
WLB: **Brooks Daniels**
LCB: Anthony Madison
RCB: **Charlie Peprah**, David Scott
SS: Roman Harper, Carlos Andrews
FS: **Charles Jones**, Chris James

LETTERMEN LOST (16)
LT: **Jarret Johnson**, Derek Sanders
NT: **Kenny King**, Bart Raulston
RE: **Kindal Moorehead**, *Todd Bates
WLB: Brad Biel
LCB: **Gerald Dixon**, Corey Ferguson
RCB: **Hirchel Bolden**
SS: **Waine Bacon**, Carl McInnish, Eric Moore
FS: Marc Miller, Hamid Haqq, Zac Holt

Starters in **Bold**. (More than one starter per position in some cases.
* Antonio Carter started in 2001, Dennis Alexander started in 2000. Atlas Herrion lettered in 2001, Todd Bates is ineligible for 2003, Mark Anderson moved from WLB to DE,

Location: Tuscaloosa, Alabama
Founded: April 12, 1831
Enrollment (Fall, 2002): 19,633
Nickname: Crimson Tide
Colors: Crimson and White
Conference: Southeastern (Western Division)
First Year of Football: 1892
Football Record: 763-276-44 (72.5%)

President: Robert Witt (Bates College)
Athletics Director: Mal Moore (Alabama, 1963)
Faculty Chairman: Joe Hornsby (Alabama, 1976)

Stadia: Tuscaloosa—-Bryant-Denny (83,576), Prescription Athletic Turf
Birmingham—-Legion Field (83,091)

2002 Record: 10-3
Bowl: not eligible
Final Ranking: 11th (AP)
Offensive/Defensive Systems: Multiple/Pressing 4/3
Lettermen Returning: 40 (18 offense, 18 defense, 4 specialists)
Offensive Starters Returning: 8
Defensive Starters Returning: 8
Specialist Starters Returning: 2

SPECIALISTS

LETTERMEN RETURNING (4)
PK/KO: **Kyle Robinson**, Brian Bostick, Mike Ziifle
SN: **Nick Ridings**

LETTERMEN LOST (2)
P: **Lane Bearden**
HLD: **Lane Bearden, Sam Collins**

Tentative Future Alabama Football Schedules

2004 Alabama Football Schedule

Date	Opponent	Site	Series Record*
September 4	Western Carolina	Tuscaloosa	First Meeting
September 11	Mississippi	Tuscaloosa	Alabama leads, 40-8-2
September 18	Penn State	State College	Alabama leads, 8-5-0
September 25	Arkansas	Fayetteville	Alabama leads, 9-4-0
October 2	South Carolina	Tuscaloosa	Alabama leads, 10-1-0
October 9	Kentucky	Lexington	Alabama leads, 31-2-1
October 16	Southern Miss	Tuscaloosa	Alabama leads, 31-6-2
October 23	Tennessee	Knoxville	Alabama leads, 43-35-7
November 6	Mississippi State	Tuscaloosa	Alabama leads, 69-15-3
November 13	LSU	Baton Rouge	Alabama leads, 43-18-5
November 20	Auburn	Tuscaloosa	Alabama leads, 38-28-1

2005 Alabama Football Schedule

Date	Opponent	Site	Series Record*
September 3	Middle Tennessee	Birmingham	Alabama leads, 1-0-0
September 10	Penn State	Tuscaloosa	Alabama leads, 8-5-0
September 17	South Carolina	Columbia	Alabama leads, 10-1-0
September 24	Arkansas	Tuscaloosa	Alabama leads, 9-4-0
October 1	Florida	Tuscaloosa	Alabama leads, 19-12-0
October 8	Southern Miss	Tuscaloosa	Alabama leads, 31-6-2
October 15	Mississippi	Oxford	Alabama leads, 40-8-2
October 22	Tennessee	Tuscaloosa	Alabama leads, 43-35-7
November 5	Mississippi State	Starkville	Alabama leads, 69-15-3
November 12	LSU	Tuscaloosa	Alabama leads, 43-18-5
November 19	Auburn	Auburn	Alabama leads, 38-28-1

*Prior to 2003 season

Southeastern Conference 5-1-2 Schedule Format

Beginning this past season (2002), the Southeastern Conference changed from a 5-2-1 format to a 5-1-2 format. Previously teams played each of the other five teams in their division (5), two teams on a permanent basis from the other division (2), and one team from the other division on a rotating basis each year. Now each team plays the other five teams in its division, one permanent opponent from the other division, and two non-division teams on a rotating basis each year. It insures an institution will play every conference member four times during a 10-year period and that each team will make two visits to every SEC stadium during the 10-year period. Previously Alabama's permanent non-division opponents were Tennessee and Vanderbilt. Now Tennessee is the lone permanent opponent from the Eastern Division. This past season Bama's non-division rotating opponents were Vanderbilt in Nashville and Georgia in Tuscaloosa, which repeats in 2007. The schedule for non-division rotating opponents for Alabama:

2003 and 2008 -- at Georgia, Kentucky
2004 and 2009 -- at Kentucky, South Carolina
2005 and 2010 -- at South Carolina, Florida
2006 and 2011 -- at Florida, Vanderbilt
2007 -- at Vanderbilt, Georgia

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